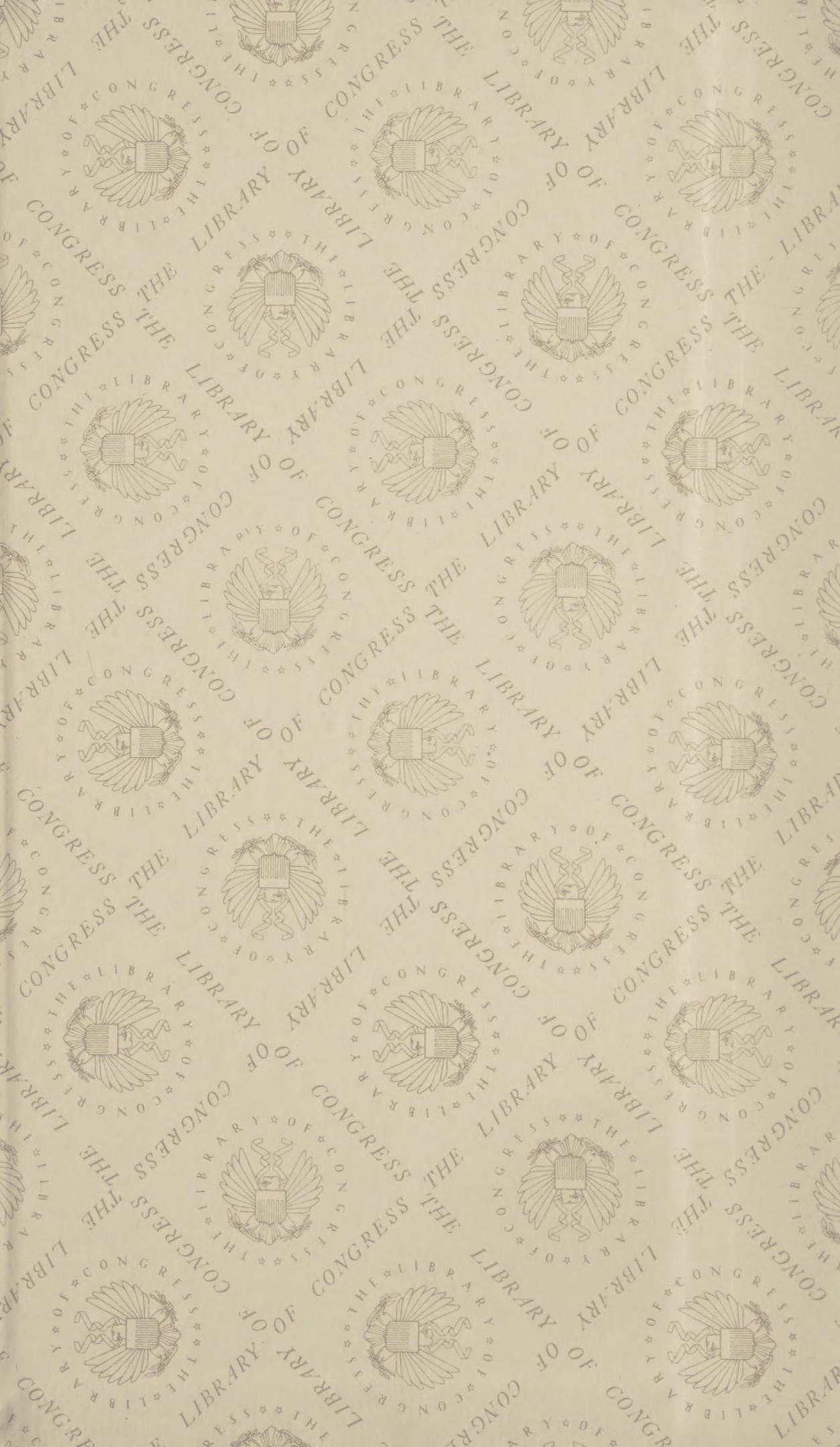
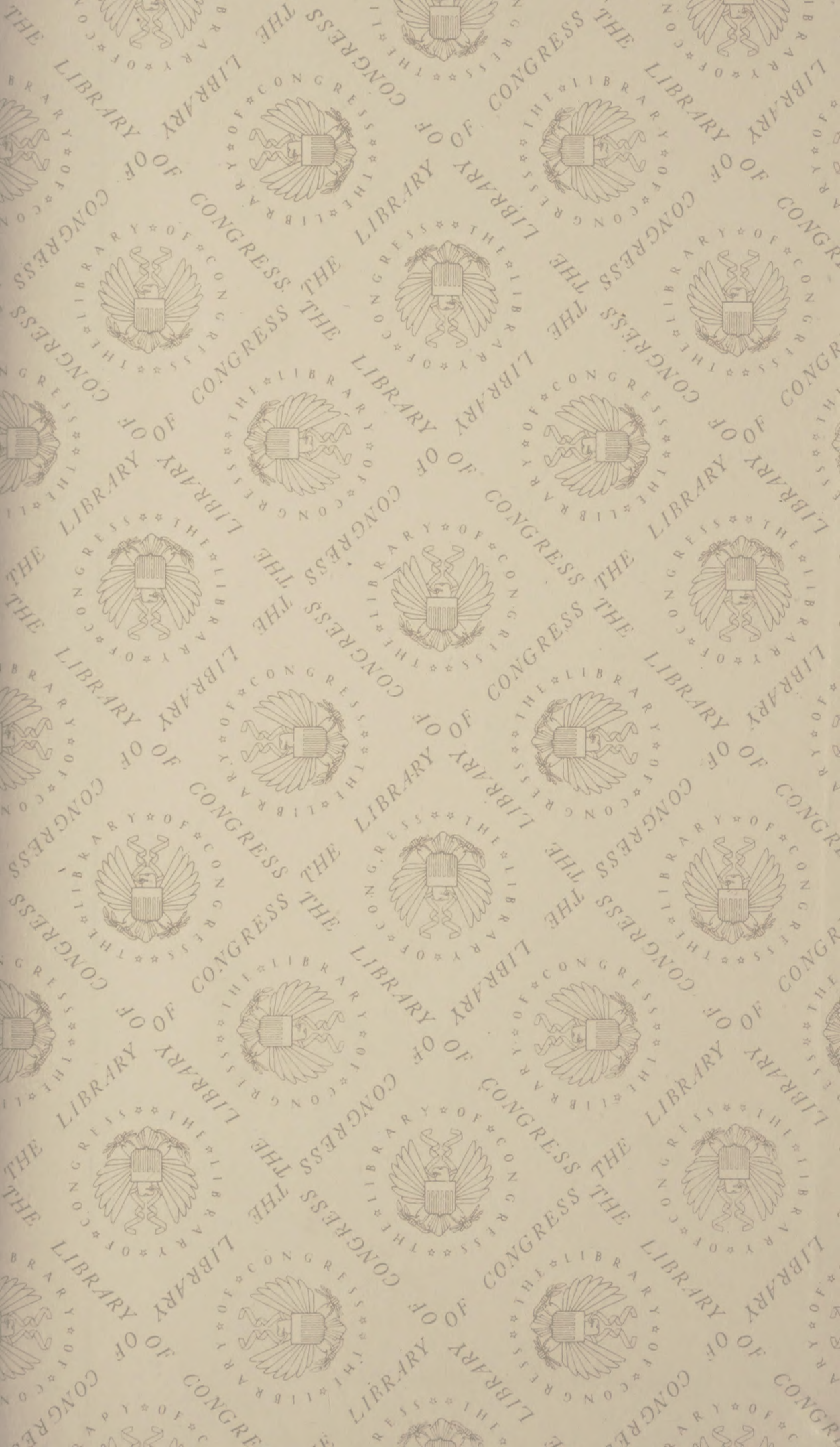






AS IT HAPPENED

ASHTON HILLERS

Author of "The Story of the
"The Story of the Story"

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

AS IT HAPPENED

By

ASHTON HILLIERS

Author of "Memoir of a Person of Quality"
"Mistakes of Miss Manisty," "Old Score," etc.



NEW YORK

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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FOREWORD

MY DEAR J—— W——,

When I set about this ticklish business of writing a Second Book (one's First is, as it were, secreted unconsciously), you, in the kindly-shrewd manner native to you, bade me beware of Three Things.

"*In your story,*" said you, "*let there be none of This*"; and you shall find, as I think, none of This in it, or not much.

"*Avoid That,*" you enjoined with minatory forefinger; and That, too, have I avoided, so far as was possible.

"*Keep clear o' The Other,*" you urged, "*for too liberal seasoning spoils the dish, dims the memory of what went before, and weakens the gust for what follows*"; and of The Other have I kept clear—nearly—but not quite.

What This and That may be you and I know, and is the business of nobody else; for what's missed is mystery. But as for The Other, I'll own 'twas against Impossibilities you warned me—from the introduction of feats, whether moral or physical, beyond the scope of mortal man.

And this, alack! have I done—twice.

Confiteor!

That a sane man should behave as I have represented a sane man behaving in Bk. V. chap. vi. is one instance. That a human being should be found alive under the circumstances related in Bk. VI. chap. xi. is another. Both are Impossibilities.

Yet (hear my excuse, such as it is), both are historical facts as well accredited as any that I know of.

For the former I refer you to a curious old Tract entitled *The Fighting Sailor Turn'd Peaceable Christian: manifested in the Convincement and Conversion of Thomas Lurting. With a short Relation of many great Dangers and wonderful Deliverances he met withal. First Written for Private Satisfaction, and Now Published for General Service.*

London: Printed and Sold by J. Sowle, in White Hart Court, in Gracious Street, October 1710.

This is that Lurting who was the friend of a certain George

Fox, and I hold him to be the witness of truth, notwithstanding the Impossibility of what he relates. Him, or some part of him, have I annexed and reset amid eighteenth-century surroundings, for which liberty may the heroic soul pardon me.

This is my Moral Impossibility.

For the physical, and yet greater (if there be degrees in impossibility), I will send you to Captain Sayer's *History of Gibraltar*, Saunders, Otley & Co., London, 1862.

For liberties taken with history I have little to repent me of. As you know, the Madras Cabal was a black business. As you also know, the assault upon the North Front in my last chapter has no warrant from the page of stout old Drinkwater. The omission, albeit no fault of his, will always seem to me a blemish upon a remarkable work. There should certainly have been an attempt at escalade, but there wasn't. If I have rectified the deficiency, and done more than justice to the military genius of Mendoza, who is hurt?

I remain, my dear J—— W——,

With renewed thanks for your counsel and encouragement,

Yours faithfully,

ASHTON HILLIERS.

July 1908.

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AS IT HAPPENED

BOOK I

IN OLD MADRAS

CHAPTER I

A CRISIS

THE guns were going in Old Madras that day in June in the year of our Lord 1778. Fort St. George was firing salvo after salvo in token of victory. Bastions, still pitted with the shot-marks of Lally's cannonade of twenty years before, were quivering with the shocks of a *feu de joie* that informed whomsoever it might concern—Blacktown to the north there, and Pudupuk, Mylapore Sao Thomé, and the ring of suburbs west and south—that the power of France in the Indies was broken at last, and that the chief of King Louis's forts and factories had struck their flags without firing a shot.

Good news, great news this, which the subalterns of the garrison were wetting British fashion. Older heads, remembering the up-and-down fighting of five-and-twenty years, wagged powdered wigs over it, opining that the luck was too good to last. Pondicheri held out, and what about Mahé? Would Hyder Ali stand aside and let us take it? God send King George and John Company no worse luck! But was it likely? The fellow had probably refitted by this after the knockings about and carryings away of his last campaign; he would be spoiling for another fight, and a smack at us would be entirely in his line (dev'lish hard

hitter, Hyder Ali); and this new falling out between French and British was a chance he would be a fool to let slip.

Boom! Boom!! Every political weathercock, shifting of late, now pointed to war, bloody war by land and sea, to forts to be stormed, to factories to be looted, districts to be annexed or held to ransom, prize-money to be divided, to promotion for the youngsters—already moistening feverish lips at the prospect; but, for the oldsters, shaken by climate and hard living, wrinkled, yellow men in their early middle age, who knew in themselves that one more campaign would be as much as they could stand, those guns sounded ominously.

Boom! Boom!! The recurrent shocks went pulsing away inland, stimulating memory as they went. It was but a few years since this same Fort St. George had surrendered to these French; still more recently the Mahrattas had attacked it, had fallen back from its embattled strength indeed, but had held its suburbs for weeks. Now, it goes without saying that a horde of sowars is bad for the trading community upon which it chooses to quarter itself, hence, at the sound of the guns, the sowkar bethought him of his secret strong-room beneath the mud of the tank, and certain British residents, planters, and retired Company's servants, who had speculated in land and built themselves bungalows in these suburbs, were weighing their chances.

Boom! Old Chisholm was standing at the couch-side of his dying wife. "She disna ken me," he mused. "It is a week syne she has spoken ma name," he frowned helplessly, pawing a great beard, revolving many things, and presently resigned the wasted, unresponsive body to its women watchers, and left the twilit room again for the shade of the tree whence he could see the top-sails of the Indiaman which was to sail for Home next day.

Ian Chisholm had not seen Scotland for many a year; he was a rich man: the dying woman within there was his only tie to the east. Were she dead—and her death, as he sorrowfully recognised, was but a matter of hours now—he would consider matters.

Boom! In another bungalow, white-walled and shaded by its mango tope, a lean, sick man turned wearily upon his charpoy and lent a listening ear. The punkah drove warm gusts about the room and shook the hanging chicks, but he felt himself sufficiently alone to steal a swift, covert glance from beneath the black penthouse of bristling brows at a brace of horse-pistols upon the wall. *Boom!* One peep was enough: they hung there ready for use, it seemed. He nodded and dozed again.

Boom ! Boom !! To his Excellency the Governor those guns knocked like the knuckles of some expected but unknown visitor. An anxious man was Mr. Thomas Rumbold. He will be a baronet before he dies, and, what concerns us more to-day, shall beget a line of fighting men and diplomatists for the service of the Empire, of whom one is still with us. In his time he had used both sword and pen ; an empty sleeve attested service under Clive ; he had sate in Parliament for Shoreham, and would presently find it needful to sit again, for the man was shrewd and bought influence. His predecessor, less politic, purchased gaudy wares, an Irish peerage, which is naught.

It was around the name and the fate of this predecessor that the anxieties of Mr. Rumbold thickened. The morning after a battle, and the year after a revolution, are unpleasant times : there is the cleaning-up to be done. This was the year following the Madras Cabal. A regularly appointed Lieutenant-Governor, one Lord Pigot, best remembered to-day as the sometime owner of the great Pigot Diamond, had been deposed by a mutinous council, arrested by a suborned aide and bribed troops, immured in his own garden-house, and never seen alive again. The man had cried in vain for help to the fleet upon the station, had appealed to the authorities at Home ; but England was far and the Governors slow. He was in his enemies' hands the while : they were playing for a tremendous stake, and took no chances. When the despatches at last arrived—formal rebuke for the mutineers and reinstatement for their prisoner—the man was dead. "Climate and constitution," said his jailers ; but found none to believe them at the time, nor since.

And the actual cause of this quarrel ? Come, I will give it in brief. Conceive a Council of State cleft by opposing greeds as by a knife, its two halves not upon speaking terms, each striving for the casting vote of a Governor as greedy as themselves, and employing the minor servants of their company upon their private speculations.

To a meeting of such a council comes me in upon a Monday morning a clerk, a junior clerk, an it please ye, a fellow of small account, of exiguous salary (nominal), whose very name has perished, albeit his day's work remains upon the record. This understrapper lays upon the council-table a petition for redress in his own name, praying the Honourable Council to collect a certain debt for him, moneys which he, the said understrapper, has lent to a certain Rajah, to wit, about a quarter of a million sterling (have patience : sober fact, I assure you). Having made his bow, presented and explained his petition, the fellow does what he should have done

before doing either, runs his eye around the table. Enemies to a man! Not a friend was present! His heart sank; they were at him, he was bidden to explain, he stammered, flushed, and when heckled as to his details, presently admitted that one item of seventy thousand pounds sterling should have stood at twelve thousand, and so on. He is chidden from the room, not too vigorously, for the men around that table were deep in the game, and were playing it just as unscrupulously, and had their own man of straw with a claim of like amount upon the same estate. The bungler rushes to his friends, "Oh, why were you not there?" "Fool," they reply, "'twas not the day. We gave you Tuesday; you came on Monday. But, cheer up, things may be mended. Whilst the other side is laughing we will act. Come again to-morrow." He came, they were there to meet him, the others absent, celebrating their success, and by the time absentees were hurried up, the previous day's minutes had been rescinded, and the claim, seventy thousand and all, passed for collection in its original shape, with an explanatory censure upon the petitioner for "incivility of demeanour" at his first hearing to account for the change of front.

It was plain that the estate could not pay two such fines; who was to put in execution first? Let the Governor decide. His Excellency did decide (for considerations received, as one fears), the beaten party threatened, the Governor attempted to arrest them, but was countermined; they arrested him: he had died in their hands.

Hence the usurper was an anxious man. Point after point he had scored, but the rubber was still in dispute. The rival party played doggedly on and held a card or two yet. The kidnapping and imprisonment had won the first game. The approval of Mr. Warren Hastings (for reasons still undisclosed) and the endorsement of the accomplished fact by a venal Court of Governors at Home had come within a pip of landing the second. The reversal of that endorsement by the Court of Proprietors had gone near to spoiling all, had not the opportune death of the prisoner in the garden-house deferred the issue.

A dead man neither tells tales nor is capable of reinstatement: that second game might be reckoned drawn. Back went the case to the India House for review; and whilst awaiting instructions, the acting Governor, with an angry ghost looking over his shoulder, sorted a weak hand for the final tussle, and led trumps. He would force the game; the French were always with us in the East; he fell upon them (in time of peace, look you).

The man had anticipated the declaration of hostilities, and

had struck without waiting for permission ; had succeeded indeed, but not to the full. Would the Honourable Court stand by him, or throw him over ? Would the King's ministers back him up ? He rubbed a dubious nose, reflecting that much depended upon how the thing was put before the big people at Home. He could indite despatches, none better ; but who could tell how they would read at the other end ? They could answer no questions ; they might need amplifying, explaining, setting in a proper light. So a man must sail for Home forthwith, a man of the best, one whom he could trust to expound his aims and smooth away difficulties. A confidential agent he must have, but not the sort he had sent the year before (he winced at remembering what that mission had cost him). The time had gone by for your backstairs crawler, skilled in the greasing of itching palms ; the business had got beyond the Court of Governors : it would be an affair of *la haute politique*, and the final word would be with the King's minister, possibly with George himself.

Whom should he send ? and once again, whom ? He had about him men of parts and men of courage, but not a man whom he could trust. One of the beaten faction was not to be thought of, whilst his personal following was compromised ; the taint of conspiracy, and of worse, clung to them one and all. Nor was he sure of them. General this, Colonel that, Member of Council the other : who would not sell him if he saw his market ?

The Governor looked over the heads of the expectant crowd and beckoned to him a soldier on active service. The man had hardly rank enough ; still, a major might pass. What status had Philip Francis when a King's minister pitchforked the fellow from his desk at the War Office into the Bengal Council ?

Oh, but there was mortified surprise, and the silence of disappointed men with claims, who knew in their hearts that the choice could be justified. There were even some who could offer excuses.

His Excellency had gone outside the ring lest he should be pestered to death by unsuitable applicants : the case was far too grave for favouritism—a job at this juncture might ruin his noble self. He was in no humour to give a Government passage to some broken punter that he might escape his native creditors, or to help a rake to prolong a life already doomed by self-indulgence.

The Indiaman lay all but ready ; her fruit and water aboard ; her powder sent below ; the sail-maker's gang had finished its labours, and the man she was to carry, the man of His

Excellency's choice, was to dine at Government House that evening, and should sail at daybreak if the wind held.

Thus it befell that Major Wade Justin, his mails packed for the voyage, his final arrangements and farewells made, was riding out to Mylapore that afternoon upon an unexpected summons. He rode slowly, for the sun was strong, and he wished, if he might, to be seen at his best at His Excellency's table later. A quiet afternoon in quarters would have been more to his mind; but this was a man who, from the day upon which he had landed in India, had never spared himself, who had always gone for his duty as soon as he saw it plainly; and as he had begun he would finish.

Let us stand aside and watch him pass, the small black hoofs of his dapple-grey Arab lightly tapping the dusty track: the rider, a well-knit, light-boned man of forty, who might pass for five-and-twenty in the saddle, so close is his seat, so light his bridle-hand, so gently have the crows'-feet pressed the angles of his alert and kindly eyes. The fellow bears himself like a griffin in his first season, showing a firm, bronzed cheek, a well-chiselled lip and shapely chin, both exquisitely scraped, for the man is a bit of a beau, neat and dainty as a youngster of half his years. So well does he carry his age, and so helpfully does the mode of his day and his service cover the touches of time, that it is only when one looks him full in the face that one is conscious of a presence which only years can confer, and which is rarely conferred to a man upon the sunny side of thirty-five.

"A d——d poor bottle-man," his mess had dubbed him whilst still a subaltern, and Justin had owned the impeachment with a disarming laugh: "You drink to the health of his Majesty, but I follow his example. Can ye point me to a better?" A placable, tactful fellow this, you perceive, who had been known to permit Philip sober to recall the cartel despatched by Philip in his cups. 'Twas a duelling age: the crack of the pistol rings out sharply and often in the annals of the time. Our countrymen in the East were at least as keen upon the point of honour as their brethren at Home: neither the forlorn fewness of their numbers nor the tremendous issues which hung upon irreplaceable lives deterred them. Warren Hastings goes out with Francis—think of it! the veritable Junius of the Letters exchanges shots with the first and greatest of England's proconsuls; the bullet that might have changed the destiny of the East flies wide, it is the spiteful pamphleteer who takes a wound. Heavens! how men quarrelled in that day, and the lengths they went! The bitterness and the pertinacities of those old "affairs of honour"! Every fort, factory, and mess had its fire-eater,

the younger the fiercer; raw griffins, with their names to make, insisted upon going out, would take no denials, and fought across the handkerchief from preference. Justin had come through this furnace unscathed. As second, as referee, as president of courts of honour he had acted times without number; but not the hottest head in the Presidency, unless bemused with rack punch, had ventured to make a principal of this dapper, courteous little man, whose sword-arm was as cool and as supple as a steel rod, and who could kill a kite upon the wing with the pistol.

Nathless, 'tis probable the man's abstemious habit had retarded his promotion. Moderation is seldom popular. In our own time the general who fights an entirely well-planned and successful campaign upon cold tea is detested and despised by the troops he leads to victory, and whose healths he sedulously preserved, whilst the rosy-gilled *viveur*, whose genial presence and bluff address are the mask of shaken nerve, may lose battle after battle and still be worshipped by his poor tipsified Tommies, kindred spirits, with a wink for frailties which they passionately deny. Justin was widely respected, but not loved as men love the victim of some endearing vice; nobody jobbed for him as men will job for a brother toper; but, otherwise, he had nothing to regret: at forty he had seen his mess out and was the doyen of the garrison, well thought of by the leading natives, and held to possess the best heart, the clearest head, and the cleanest sheet in Fort George.

Hence, since everything comes to him who can wait, when his Excellency wanted an agent-extraordinary he picked this prim, silent fellow, grumbling as he made his selection, that if it came to heavy fighting, the Thirty-ninth would miss the best wing-leader in India.

To return to our man on the gray Arab.

Where compound walls constricted a suburb lane, the rider must needs draw rein: a palki issuing from a garden entrance blocked the way. Some one within was swearing gruffly at a servant who hastily effaced chalk-marks from the door. The execrations passed into a joyful shout, "Ho, Justin, my good fellow! This is luck! Set me down, boys. Bearer, help me out of this. Wait. I'm with ye in a moment, old friend! Ha! Ha! My crutch, boy!" A hot-faced man of full habit, puffing and chuckling as he moved, approached the rider, whom courtesy compelled to dismount.

"So here I have ye! Ha ha!—the man of all I was dyin' to see! Come, my dear major—ye know my gardens. What? An engagement? Absurd! Oh, but ye must and shall!"

"Nay, Sir Robin, I thank ye heartily; my time is not my own, and, with your leave, I must not and shall not!" replied Justin, with a certain smiling crispness, and it was the florid general who yielded, as men always did yield to the impenetrable courtesy of Justin.

"What, not a bottle? and ye sail to-night. A parting glass, then!" urged the other.

"Not a thimbleful, as you love me. Come, I appeal to your judgement: I have far to ride in this sun, and am to dine with the Governor."

"Hang the Governor!" growled the Governor's Commander-in-Chief, for it was he, no less; and instantly forcing the jolly laugh for which he was famous, hobbled nearer to his companion and caught his sleeve; "Then, as ye will not sit with me, ye piece of cruelty, I must make my adieux standing, though I swear my toe is on fire already. Look here, my boy, I congratulate ye. 'Tis Home ye are going, and with despatches. The billet was mine by rights, ha! ha! But let that pass."

"They couldn't spare Sir Robin——"

"And that's truer than ye know," with a meaning nod and a grimace. "Justin,—my boy, I may call ye?—I've always stood your friend. Ye'll admit as much: 'twas your cursed punctiliousness, not my ill-will, that has kept ye a poor man. Ye've had your chances."

"Have I complained?"

"Never! But, as I was saying, I have always given ye my good word, and now I am by way of wanting a bit of my own back, for I have need of yours. Yes!" The speaker's jovial face was drawn and earnest now, and his voice husky and caressing, his bloodshot eye sought to catch and hold his man's. Justin, detained by the sleeve, stiffened instinctively, apprehending disagreeables.

"Ye will back me before the Governors, Justin? Ye will? We have pulled through a ticklish time together. Poor Pigot was an arrogant fool, and greedy; and that's God's truth, though the man's dead. He had made three fortunes. Why couldn't he go Home and give the rest a chance? 'Twas bound to come in some form or other, for we are none of us here for our healths. We all want a dip in the lucky-bag (all but yourself, ha! ha!). But, as for what happened, ye know, Justin, as well as any man, that I had no hand in it. I need not particularise; but there are things which an officer and a gentleman—— That arrest, now, 'twas mutiny, no less; and the manner of it was infernally inhospitable. To drink a man's wine, share his carriage and all, with the warrant in one's pocket! No, no; a Fletcher couldn't do it, but a Stuart,

faugh ! These adventurers are not squeamish. No ; I assure you, I——”

“ Just so. You were not involved. As I was given to understand, your gout——”

“ Was ‘ unpardonably opportune.’ Rumbold’s word, confound him ! Not to my face, but I know what they say in the closet. O, I have still my friends ! ha ! ha ! But none like you, my boy, none ! And ’tis your good offices with the Court I am building upon.”

But Justin gave no sign. He was courteously anxious to escape, but had seen no opening yet. Fletcher ran on, edging nearer : there was more to come. His eye twinkled as if he had perpetrated a joke ; he emitted small humorous sounds and indulged in grotesque facial contortions whilst loosing at intervals a rich, throaty laugh as if to point a good story ; standing back from his man to watch the jape home, still holding to his sleeve. ’Twas Sir Robert’s way (“ Robin ” he was for being called)—it was his manner, his temperament, as courteous reserve was Justin’s ; but the world must be amused, and is apt to undervalue staid, good service whilst profuse to its favourite buffoon.

“ These fellows have had the devil’s own luck, so far ; but, mark me, the thing will miscarry, yet. That garden-house business—we know what will out ; eh, my boy ? ” The husky voice fell low and tremulous.

“ Sir Robin, I know nothing, and have shut my ears to bazaar *gup*. You had sent me upon special service up-country before the trouble began, and I have been engaged with the French in one form or another ever since——”

“ You ? Who is talking of you ? ” blurted the other with momentary loss of patience. “ It is I who am in the cleft stick, and need you, O, more than I can tell ! Yet ye have put off coming to me until the last moment, and want to give me the go-by : I swear ye do ! Have I not writ to ye twice ? Never say ye did not get—Whew ! Then, begad, ’tis as I feared ; our people have been got at : there’s a hedge about us. I was upon my way to ye when ye came up. I swear ’tis a providence. Ha ! ha ! ” he laughed. “ For, lookye, Justin, ’twas necessary for me to have speech with ye at all hazards, and here we are, though I fancy at some risk to us both.” He glanced sharply down the lane and chuckled grimly.

“ So bad as that, Sir Robin ? ”

“ My boy, ye know nothing : that’s your safety. But I know all, to my danger. Both sides approached me : I—well—I played with ’em. What was a man to do ? And it seems I’ve fallen between two stools. You were away, but a man

upon the spot, as I was, and with my tom-toe in a vice, and in such agony that I signed anything that that villain Stuart put before me—— They acted without my knowledge; I was as innocent as a babe; I swear it; but, nominally, ye know, I was in command. They claim to hold my signature for everything the military did; *yes, even for what ye know*—a meaning nod, the jolly cheeks shook, the eyes were urgent—“Yes, Stuart lays it to me—think, *to me!* He has put it about that my gout was a blind. ‘*Who stuck the Pigot?*’ is the cant word of my British regiments: the little rascal drums shout it after my palki. I dread going abroad. They chalk it on my compound gates. Look! ‘Tis damnable! Conceive, being charged with a crime ye never so much as contemplated, and hate the thought of! And meanwhile, this twelvemonth they have kept me upon the sick-list. Stuart acts: I have not power to post a sentry.”

“General, I commiserate you—but——”

“Well ye may, my boy, for I doubt I am the next to go. Say the cry grows hot, and the Court of Proprietors wants a victim, here I lie, handy and helpless, a temple sacrifice, a goat to be pushed to the *mugger!* Whilst if I protest publicly, appeal to the Court, say—as *he* did—egad, there’s other garden-houses, and ‘twill soon be ‘*Who killed Cock Robin?*’ Ha! ha!”

The speaker was in pain, was in danger, was suffering the extreme of anxiety, yet he laughed. There are men who would laugh upon the ladder with the noose around the neck. Robert Fletcher was of the breed.

Justin, though outwardly calm, was painfully embarrassed. This was not one of the valedictory visits which he had contemplated. Fletcher’s familiarities, his appeals to a friendship which had never subsisted, and to good offices which had not been rendered, left his former subordinate watchful and cold. Yet the distress of the one and the fine nature of the other were tending to an understanding when the haste of the suppliant spoilt all. It came at last suddenly, for the man was desperate and could trust no go-between.

“Well, I shall be thinking of ye, shall be infinitely obliged to ye, too. I dare not detain ye longer, my boy. There’s my case. I place my good name in your hands. You will be pleased to use it at your discretion——”

“Sir Robin, I? No, sir!” returned Justin with surprise and stiffly, putting his hands behind him.

“In my service, of course, but at your unfettered——”

“Again no, sir,” more stiffly. “I decline to act for ye; I will accept no commission: I can entertain nothing of the kind.”

“But, my dear Major——”

“ Sir Robin, I must be gone ; I am waited for. I have the honour to wish—I beg you to release my sleeve. Sir, respect yourself. Our people are watching us.” The men drew apart ; a packet small and hard fell and lay in the highway dust. Justin remounted with dignified speed ; the other, with working lips and hot eyes, watched him go.

CHAPTER II

OLD FRIENDS

JUSTIN meanwhile rode on with so grave a face that Ibn Ali, horse-boy and humble friend, trotting at his master's stirrup, knew that something must be amiss. Something there was lying upon the Major's mind, touching him more nearly than the importunity of General Fletcher. England in the East, haughtily clean to-day, was then so insolently corrupt that nothing in our recent public life, nothing that has occurred within living memory in our colonies or dependencies will afford an adequate instance. Having no word of our own to connote an idea with which the average Englishman is happily unfamiliar, one must borrow from the too copious vocabulary of our American cousins to describe conditions not dissimilar from theirs. To the boss of an Indian district in Justin's time boodle was the breath of his nostrils, whilst graft was the dream of his white understudy. What else were they there for? The salaries of both were microscopic: they were permitted to "trade" upon their private accounts, which included hypothecations and the purchase of reversions, the buying-up and prosecution of fictitious claims before friendly judges, and the advancing of money at usurious rates of interest.

Hence Justin, who knew, by report at least, of this latest iniquity and other deals as bad, and had marked from outside the extremities and desperate resources of the gamesters, was past being shocked. Where all were rogues, and where every man was for himself and in haste to be rich, jockeying and foul riding were normal; and our friend could well believe that a clique at its wits' end had stooped to the blackest of deeds, and might again. He glanced at the case and passed it without comment, as in the course of his military life he had been compelled to see and to pass without comment many shocking and piteous sights. What would you? That the man should have broken his sword and gone Home? Nay; there was his service to be considered, and England to boot. His own hands

were clean ; and hence it had come about that he was going Home with an unbroken sword.

For his unlucky commander he had a movement of sympathy. Sir Robin was a man whose gallant bearing and constitutional high spirits had through life imposed upon himself and others, had secured him step after step, and had at length advanced him to a position where jokes under fire and headlong courage under orders were insufficient. The indecision and moral infirmity which lay at the root of his character had worked to the surface when placed in command and proved his undoing.

No ; it was not the difficulties of the man whom he had just left that narrowed the rider's eye and pursed his lip, but the thought of the one to whom he was going. This belated request for an interview had come from an old comrade with whom Justin had not exchanged a word for years, between whom and himself subsisted the misunderstanding of half a lifetime, a misunderstanding patent to their fellows, but based upon a secret understanding to which neither had ever referred, or had hardly so much as admitted to himself.

In years past Justin had awaited this summons ; he had for long ceased to expect it : now, at the twelfth hour it had come to him ; for apart from his near departure, his enemy, who lived in seclusion, was spoken of as a dying man. There remained but to accede to the request.

A regimental quarrel, you are saying ? Yes, a regimental quarrel ; and how gangrenous a dispute may become between men of the same mess is revealed at times when the amazing findings of a court-martial are discussed in the press and the soiled linen of some historic regiment is washed in public. If these things occur at Aldershot, and the Curragh, in our placable century, what befell, think you, a hundred and fifty years since upon tropical stations, where the liver was normally congested, and pickles and tempers were hot, and a public opinion could hardly be said to have existed ?

Yet Justin does not strike one as quite the man for a vendetta. See him caressing the translucent ear of his mare, taking silent farewell of her, as she swings slowly along uphill at that delicious pace of which well-bred and well-handled Gulf cattle possess the secret, the rein slack upon her withers, the bit lying lightly upon her bars.

And all suddenly the thought came home to him that this was the last time ; that never again, in whatever span of life might be his—and the man felt strong springs of life within him—would eye and ear of his drink in the shows and sounds to which they had been used so long. Suddenly, I say, for His Excellency's summons had come to him as a surprise, and

had found him immersed in his work, and had thrown upon him a burden of hasty transferences, payings-off and callings-in, the windings-up of the affairs of years, his own and other men's. These businesses had filled his hands by day and deepened his sleep o' nights for a week past. Now, his work done to the last, least item, his hands hung idle for the first time in his life, his mind relaxed; and eye and ear grew sensitive to impending change.

Home thoughts did not excite him, for to Justin India was home. An orphan, without, so far as he knew, man or woman of his race, he had come out to the East as a boy in his teens, a runaway from indentures forced upon him by a harsh and rascally guardian. He was a gentleman volunteer, one of those ragged esquires-errant who marched and fought upon the outside right of the pivot-man of the right company, drawing kit and rations, but touching no pay. No service was too desperate for these young paladins, so be that it was but conspicuous; they were specialists in the affixing of petards, past-masters at two-and-twenty in the art of escalade, and learned in the leading of forlorn hopes. They sent in their names for everything, and took all chances, biting their nails until it should please a jealous mess to recommend them to the favourable notice of an autocratic colonel, who, at his leisure, might—or might not—forward the recommendation to the Honourable Court of Governors at Home. This done, in due time, if fever and bullet forbore him, the lad started as cornet, or ensign, according to his service. Thus had Justin begun, a poor gentleman soldier of fortune. And now he was about to leave it all: the familiar sun between his shoulder-blades, the familiar squeak of his saddle, the kindly whinny of the wheeling kites, and before him upon the white road the little glossy-backed crows drooping their wings in the afternoon heat, and a gray snake crawling. Never again!

He had crossed the Coum River; the last of the bazaars lay behind him; houses of a better class bordered the way, all spick and span—those sowars put match to everything that would burn when they went. Homes of wealthy natives these, and of English too; white-walled bungalows embowered in shady compounds, where toddy-palms clapped their hands in the hot wind as if adding their applause to the measured booming of the fort guns.

From the foliage-shaded gateway of one of these residences a tall man in white duck hailed the horseman.

“Hillo, sir!—yes, you, Major—tak' a pull at yer meare and come in for a bit crack. What! hass the mon nae mercy upo' himsel' that he maun gang stravaugin' aboot i' the sun to the last minute? Come in, sir, come in!”

The speaker was "Old Chisholm," a retired John Company's servant, domiciled for long with a lady of colour whom he had married according to the native rite. He stepped forth into the road as he hailed, a great, gaunt fellow, the framework of what once had been a fine, up-standing man; bent now and stiffened by years, but strong yet with the constitutional toughness of an unspoiled race. The bony, deeply lined face was set in a bush of hair; his voice was deep but gentle; he came forward with extended palm, his left hand at play with a little mongoose which twisted and clambered all over him as he moved.

The Major drew rein with the courtesy that was his nature, but unwillingly, dreading the delay incidental to alighting at the gate of an old acquaintance who was an inveterate gossip with the whole of his time upon his hands. Ibn Ali held bit and off-stirrup for his master, who was down in one graceful, elastic movement, and had the white-clad figure by the hand.

"Mr. Chisholm, I am glad to see ye. Forgive me for not having called to pay my respects; believe me, no discourtesy was intended, but, knowing of your trouble, I thought——"

The other shrugged his broad shoulders, "Ou, aye, an' indeed I am in tribble, ma frien', and not in a posture to receive, as one may say; but, yersel' is a deeferent maitter, an auld frien', an' you leaving for Home." He laid his great hand upon his visitor's shoulder and led him in. "She is deein', mon, she disna recognise me this sax days."

Justin knew that the reference was to the lady of the house, and bent his head in mute sympathy, for the marriage was known to have been one of mutual affection and had stood the test of years. There was nothing to be said: he had dreaded this leave-taking; a wifeless man, he believed himself bad at condolence, longed for the right word, but found nothing. But his eyes spoke for him, and the old Scot wrung his hand in appreciation.

"Yes, I am for England," said the Major, breaking fresh ground; "yes, upon Government service—as to which ye will excuse me from enlarging. Yes, and I sail to-morrow, as I think. Has my old friend any commands? 'Twill be my duty and my pleasure——"

The ancient Scotsman smiled wistfully and drew his long, snuffy moustache through his fingers before replying, and his reply, when it came, was wide of the question. "Man, ye are weel oot on't. Na, na! I am speirin' naethin'. Aiblins I ken as much as yersel', wha was awa' up-kintra, as I think, when the mischief was a-doin'. I'm laith to spik ill of a Stuart, but a shentleman bearin' that name should never

ha' set his han' to—to—*what is laid till him*. An' fwhat's at the boddom o't? Loot: juist thot! The queestion was whedder Rumbold's pindaris or poor Pigot's should hae the shearin' o' the nigger. Sawl o' me!" He took snuff and drove, as it were, the whole bad business from his system with the potency of a magnificent sneeze.

"An' so ye are takin' yer last luik roun': the ootlandish trees, the minars, the heathen temples, juist the auld fameeliar features o' yer step-mither, India. Ye'll aiblins hae forgot the face o' the mither that bore ye. Twa-and-twenty years mak' a muckle hole in a man's life. Ye cam' oot in the '56, the Black Hole year, aw'm thenkin'. I'm no vara like to forget that year masel'."

"Faith, no!—and yourself in——?"

"The '46. I had ma rizzons for coming," with a slow, pawky wink. "Ma frien, ye may aiblins has suspecioned that aw'm a hielan' man. Aweel, I am." He made the avowal with an air of having imparted a family secret, and continued: "Ye'll remember, maybe, the troubles in the '45. 'Twas when ye were a wean, Justin. I wass in the maist o' the fechtin'. For example, I took a sma' wound in the affair wi' Cope's Horse, an' anither scaith at Preston. Neither wass a maitter to mak' a sang about; but the twa o' them weakened me for the coorse wather, and I was left ayint at a place they ca' Warrington, wi' a sair host and weakness of the chest contrackit wi' lyin' wet. An' meantime, Justin, cam' the retreat fram Derby; and as things seemed gangin' agee, it seemed to me that the British Islands were no' juist a healthy place for me. So, I revairtit to the sea, my oreeginal profession; for I was great at the fushin'. I mind that ma first berth was in a West Indiaman in the Mersey; and fram the Islands I fand ma way till the plantations, and fram the Chesapeake till this. Yes, I landed at Fort George doun yander on my thretty-eighth birthday, whilk mak's me a man o' the screeptural span the day. Aweel, there's ma secret; ye're the first mon to wham I've tellt it. Wheest! ye slippery sma' beastie," he cooed to the lissom creature that slid its sinuous length through his caressing fingers almost as nimbly as one of its secular enemies, the snakes.

Justin smiled sympathetically. The old rebel's adventures had been known to Fort George society for a generation, but it was not in him to wound the innocent vanity of a garrulous veteran who had landed a penniless adventurer thirty-two years earlier, and had won each step by his conduct, had watched the fort surrendered to the French, seen it restored to the British, served under Clive at the taking and subsequent defence of Arcot, and helped at the making

of so much history. But if he had calculated upon brief farewells he had reckoned without his host. Chisholm, whilst talking, had beguiled his guest to the shade of a wild mango, where his bearer, obedient to a nod, served wine.

"Ye maun brak yer rule, Justin, for the auld man's sake. A stoup at pairting, *doch-an-dorwich*, ye ken, the stirrup-cup. Be still, ye little torment;" this to the mungoose, whose sharp, black muzzle and beady eyes peered out from the bush of hair about the old man's ears, now from one shoulder, now from its fellow.

"This is nae bad Madeira, Justin. Your health, ma frien'! *Bon voyage!* as poor Lally used to toast: a great man, sir, and damnably ill-used by his maisters at the last. I was temptit to tak' sairvice wi' the French masel', but have never repentit ma deceesion."

The men had arisen to touch glasses. The visitor set his down, but remained standing with just the hint of expectancy in his manner of the guest awaiting an opportunity for taking his leave. His host saw but ignored.

"Ma commands?—" he mused. "Man, there's nane that kens the name o' me noo. My faither's hoose is awa' north by Loch Shin. Ye wull never ha' heard tell o' Overskaig in Sutherland? 'Twas hame to me aince, but I ha' not sin the place for mair years than I care to think on. I laft it a feckless laddie o' fifteen, with no English (that I picked up in Embro' and the West), aye, a caddy o' an auld, puir family, wi' a mind to see the warl."

Justin, knowing by this time that he was in for it, nodded and reseated himself.

"An' I've sin it, ye're thenkin'. Ou, aye, from the '25 till the '45 I wass aye upo' the move: in Paris awhile, whaur I foregaithered wi' Monsieur Lally that I named the noo; and wi' mony anither shentleman of fortune of the richt way o' thenkin'. Ye wull no luik gleg upon me if I own to having been in the fair trade for some while, and to rinnin' cargoes o' contraband between Versailles and Embro'."

"Neither of them ports, as I think, Mr. Chisholm," laughed Justin.

"And that's true, too; but ye must ken that the stuff I cairrit wad float in vara fleet water. Aiblins it would be a letter between the thicknesses o' the heel o' ma brogue; aiblins money. Oh, they could trust a Chisholm: nane o't stuck to me. When the Prince landed I wass oot on the heather. On the wrang side o' course, a stranger among the clans that drew till him; for, as ye ken, the Sutherlands, the Gunns, the Mackays, and Chisholms were a' for the Black Cockade. 'Ma commands?'" He drew breath. "(The first

should be to fill yer quaich.) Aha, it hass come till me! See here, Justin, gin ye should ever find yersel' lying wi' the Black Watch, speir for ony mon o' ma name. There wass mony shentlemans o' the Campbells and Mackays took the aith when that corps wass raisit, and gin there wass an oye o' ma brither's o' the soldiering age 'tis ten to ane he wull be in that regiment; more by token there was never vivers or a douce leevin' to be made alang the shore o' Shin for mair than ane at a time. For the caddies it wass aye 'Tak' the road, ma son! And so it falls that the Chisholms are a restless name. I wass something given to traivel masel' . . . 'Ma commands?' 'Mountains never meet, but frien's may.' He quoted the proverb in the Gaelic, hitching forward as he spoke, and detaching from some underbelt a small straight dirk of ancient pattern. "Tak' it, mon, and wear it until ye meet (gin ye ever do) a man o' the auld Sutherland Chisholms, and then, gin ye hae the mind, hand it on till him wi' word fram ane o' them that'll ne'er see bonnie Loch Merkland mair. No but what they wad be blithe to see me: there's no black bluid atween me an' ma kin; 'tis not wi' me as it is wi'——" he jerked his thumb towards the white bungalow among its trees a quarter-mile away and nearer to the Tank of Sao Thomé. "Ye wull no' be takin' yer leave o' *him*, aw'm thenkin'?"

"Of Colonel Travis? It is just him that I am riding to see. Which reminds me, my time——"

"Rest ye, caillach," growled the old man, putting his importunate little pet aside. "To see *him*?" he glanced up so keenly, and hung upon the word so long, that the swish of the horsehair fly-whisk and the murmured chanty with which Ibn Ali stilled the restless-footed Arab at the gate, sounded near in the silence. "Mon, what taks ye till Travis?"

"He has sent for me," said Justin; but the other waved the reason aside as irrelevant.

"He hates ye like the vara teffle," he said.

"I might dispute that, Mr. Chisholm; but at any rate I have never given him an excuse for ill-will, and have certainly never hated him. That we have failed—to—how shall I say?——"

"Tcha! the fallow semply detests ye. He has sent for ye?—and for what? Ye sail to-morrow at latest: he knows sae much, nae doot. Mon, he wad fain ha' dune ye an injury this mony a year, an' the noo's his opportunity. Hae a care, Justin, hae a care!"

"I anticipate nothing——"

"Ye winna be brakin' bread wi' the mon," insisted the other, coming to details.

"It is most unlikely. I do not expect to be bidden. I take the matter in hand—as to which I am wholly in the dark—to be of a business complexion ; but, if he should offer hospitality——"

"Decline as ye value yer life, mon, and dinna pit ae drop o' his liquor till yer lip. Oh, I ken weel what aw'm sayin'; ou, aye; I could hae pit a spoke in his wheel mair than aince since we twa fell to leevin' the life o' the native. There hass bin queer doings in the bungalow over there if I may believe my people. The fallow is a violent fallow, with a weakness for *bhang*, and 'tis ane that neither kens nor cares what he diz when in his tantrums. What signifies a punkah-wallah more or less, or a *hubshi* Kaffir-boy, think ye? Snake-bite he laid it to, and it may hae bin. 'Tis strange nane o' ma people die that way. I am no the Governor, and hanna fashed masel' aboot ither folks' maitters; but, ye air ma frien', and gin ye air for the Ca Sao Thomé I gang wi' ye."

"Indeed, old friend, ye will not!" laughed Justin, with just a touch of impatience. "I thank ye from my heart for the offer, but I am persuaded it is needless, and, if it were otherwise——" the little man leaned slightly forward in his seat and shrugged his shoulders as one who would imply that he was a soldier and could answer for himself. "See here, Chisholm, to set your mind at rest, I will look in upon you on my way back, say in half an hour from now."

"An' thot iss weel thocht of, too; and ginye be no' here in forty minutes, I wull raise my people and do masel' the honour o' calling upo' ma neighbour for the first time, and speirin' for ye."

Justin arose, declining more wine; but his host, with something still to impart, disclosed an unwonted difficulty in making his point. "Yer pairdon, ma frien'; ye'll no' thenk me inqueesitive, but—ye are for London; aweel, London used to be a gey costly place. Naething for naething there, an' nae muckle for yer siller."

Justin nodded a general assent to the proposition.

"As ye ken, I've had the preevilege of guidin' the ventures o' some o' yer sairvice this mony years, and I canna help kennin' hoo it stans' wi' the maist o' ye." Justin was stiffening, but his friend persisted.

"Come, Major, 'tis kenned that ye are nae a rich man—the mair credit till ye, for ye hae had the same chances as the lave o' us o' shaking the pagoda-tree. But the time is comin' whan ye'll want something a wee mair tangible than yer scruples."

"Mr. Chisholm, I beg——"

"Dinna snap the neb aff yer auld frien' ! Let me give ye a letter o' credit to my London agent ; at the least he will advise ye as to yer investments, and send ye to an honest lapidary gin ye are takin' hame a wheen stanes. Oh, but I'd like fine to be allowed to dae mair. Thenk ! I'm weel dune by, a warm man, Justin, thretty years o't, and gettin' all ma time ; and 'pon ma sawl, I've nane in the haill warl', save her that's deein' within there, to hand it on tae, nor ony alive that I regaird sae kindly as yersel——"

"Mr. Chisholm, this is more than brotherly. Ye are a friend indeed ; and if ever I should need a helping hand there is no one to whom I would turn before yourself, but, at present——" he drew a watch from his fob. "Good Lord ! how time slips whilst chatting with an old friend !" He clapped for his *sais*.

"Ye'll nae pairmet me ?"

"Not another drop, I thank ye. We'll not shake hands ; expect me under the time." He swung up into the saddle ; the Scotsman watched him go.

"Prood—prood as a Rajpoot ! I dinna like—but, he hass a goot little side-arm whateffer : a dab i' the wame wi' ma faither's *skene dhu* wad settle wi' the prettiest fellow that ever trod shoe-leather. But it is short i' the reach : I wad like fine to hae gane wi' him." Hi, Justin !" he was after the slow-pacing Arab with long strides, regardless of his bare head. "Mon, whaur's yer sword ?"

"Packed and sent aboardship."

"Then ye sall tak' mine."

"A thousand thanks, no : it is not the weapon of my service. Ye were in the Auxiliary Light Horse, I think ; it would betray us both, and needlessly, as I am persuaded."

"A sword-stick, then ! I haf the ferry thing, an Italian foil-blade in a hollow malacca : 'twill pass for a walking-cane."

"And I come to him mounted ; worse and worse ! More thanks, but again no !" The mettle of the man made itself felt in his final refusal. The mare fidgeted.

"Aweel, ye sall nae refuse me this !" Chisholm extended a Mull ewe's-horn solidly fitted in brass. "This, and the wee dirkie are the twa things laft to me that I brocht fram me faither's roof."

"Add a heart for your friend," said Justin, and inhaled his pinch. Obedient to some private signal, the mare broke : the gaunt old man was left twirling his yellow moustache in the road. "'Tis an unwarrantable resk, whateffer. Travis iss a budmash, a cateran ; I haf watched him slip down and

doun fram Colonel o' the auld Thirty-ninth—*Primus in Indis*—with a record second only to Coote's, until he hasna a fallow-countryman to cry Cot bless ye! Aw'm thenkin' whether there'll ha' bin a white face within his compound gates this twa years. That stoory o' the way he treated his young wife hass aye stuck till him."

CHAPTER III

OLD ENEMIES

" 'PON my life he has come after all ! " the sick man upon the charpoy beneath the punkah in the wide bare room of Ca Sao Thomé was soliloquising. The lapse was no symptom of his sickness—he was very sick—but the inveterate habit of a European whose intercourse with men of his colour had been severed years before, and who permitted himself the use of his mother tongue in long confabulations, letting his inmost thought loose in self-communings, secure in the ignorance of his servants.

The wasted body turned painfully upon its string mattress, the lean, lined face half-hidden, fakir fashion, in an Oriental profusion of hair and beard, took on a singularly apprehensive expression as his guest entered.

The man had been effeminately handsome when in his prime; but his prime was long past. All that the—at that day—extravagant and barbaric growth of hair permitted to be seen was a pair of sunken eyes veiled by tufted black eyebrows, a thin, aquiline nose, and a lofty forehead with which life had dealt hardly; it was ploughed from temple to temple with the parallel groovings of worry, vexation, and disappointment, and cleft between the eyes by the sharp imprint of temper; but laid across these disfigurements was a more lightly traced structure of vertical wrinkles due to the contraction of the brows in secret night horrors of self-disgust. You shall see this double fretwork upon the foreheads of aged, long-sentence criminals: it gives to a countenance a singularly forbidding expression.

The lower face was clothed with a beard of some years' growth; white and full it flowed from cheeks and throat below a black down-curving moustache. This, and a V-shaped patch of ebon hair upon the lower lip and chin, dividing the patriarchal whiteness upon either side of it, gave a sinister cast to the emaciated face, with its delicate features and harsh expression.

"Remove the birds," he said, addressing a Tamil servant, who separated and caged the fighting quails and slipped silently from the room. His master turned his head with studied nonchalance to the visitor who had come in response to his urgent request, the man upon whom he had not set eyes for three years, yet whose presence he found as detestably familiar as though they had quarrelled and parted yesterday.

'Yes, there he stood again, the erect, well-poised figure that owed nothing of its soldierly set-up to straps or padding, and there, bent upon him, were those experienced, uncompromising eyes, direct, unsmiling, non-committal as ever, and the firm chin and muscular lips with the capacity for restrained and courteous speech which he had tested so often—all that he had known, line by line, and contour by contour, and hated with the hatred of a jealous colleague for twenty years.

To the sick man the comely health, vigour, and sanity of his visitor were so many offences. The fellow's appearance was too disgustingly satisfactory. Here was the subordinate whom he had sworn to break still unbroken, the comrade whom he had injured and maligned in vain, who had silently lived down his spite. He loathed him point by point and feature by feature with the unpardoning, personal animosity of the wrong-doer for the creature whom he has wronged.

He found himself beginning to shake. He had planned this interview, schooled himself for it; but now, at the first instant of contact, discovered that he had miscalculated his endurance; his three years' secretion of hatred came near to choking him; it surged to his lips with an almost physical revulsion; he gulped it down. Not yet—not yet—presently.

"Haw, Justin, how d'ye do? I protest I am glad to see ye. Infinitely obliged, I'm sure. Be seated, I beg. Pardon my want of ceremony; I grow curst uncivil: 'tis the price one pays for this life . . . servants, only servants to consider, ye see. What! no chair? None, as I live! I have but few white callers, ye know; but still I have a chair or two somewhere. My bearer shall smart for this, begad! Excuse my not rising. I get damned helpless. Will ye be pleased to collect cushions, rugs, anything as a makeshift? Thanks, I swear I am beholden to ye."

The visitor had not opened his lips since entering; he had bowed, and bowed again. His reception surprised him, the manner of it was all wrong. Curt coolness might have passed, or any degree of civil reserve, but this offhand, *de haut en bas* assumption of a superior geniality rang false: there was nothing in the past relations of the two to justify it. The man upon the couch had not offered his hand at his entering,

nor pleaded disablement in excuse ; yet some infirmity seemed in the case, for the right hand and wrist lay motionless within the loose swathes of a silken shawl. All the life of the members seemed concentrated in those fleshless yellow fingers of the left hand, which tapped restlessly upon the lid of a small box within reach.

An awkward silence fell, mere vacuity, which Justin sought to fill with some murmured commonplace. The other was not attending, was insensible to the solecism and broke into a second soliloquy. " Damme, the fellow has worn well, dev'lish well ! Ye are standing the climate better than any of us," he pursued, rousing, and addressing his visitor directly and clearly as one addresses a foreigner. "'Tis not your liver that is taking ye Home. Lucky dog ! Ye were always a fellow of careful habits. Well, the mess had its laugh, but 'tis your turn to-day—at what is left of us."

Justin bowed with a grave little smile, attentive and watchful, but said nothing. He had no small-talk, nor desired to prolong the interview. He had arranged his cushions at his host's left hand, not too near : the room was large, hot, and empty of furniture. He observed with some surprise that the punkah hung motionless. He was amazed at the change in his late colonel, but hoped that he was successfully concealing his astonishment. The man was altered out of knowledge. He had come unprepared for such disguise. Not alone the beard, but the hair, white as old-age and long as a woman's, seemed extraordinary in one whom he had known as the most point device exponent of the military mode of his day.

Travis had adopted the native habit—loose trousers, cummerbund, and voluminous silken jacket.

With Justin it was a fundamental conception that an Englishman in the East should respect his blood, and that declension to the native standard of morals was petty treason to the Company whose salt he ate. The man refused on principle to condescend in meats, dress, or manners. " Depend on't," he had once said, provoked to speak out by finding a subaltern chewing betel, " you won't conciliate these people by sinking to their level. They appreciate caste ; let us maintain our own, one equally above Brahmin and Muslim." He was one of the few who never wore mufti, who would have as soon accepted dustoor upon a regimental contract as ridden with the short stirrup, and would have only relinquished his queue with his life.

To such a precisian the spectacle presented by Colonel Travis was deplorable. The fellow had let himself go.

The sensitive vanity of the *déclassé* was conscious of his guest's tacit disapproval, and resented it whilst endorsing its

justice. The man felt his ground giving: he had lured his old subordinate to his house for a purpose of his own, but had mismanaged the piece badly; here, at the rising of the curtain, the other filled the centre of the stage, whilst his own pretension to the leading part was discounted by the costume of his choice, and his hectoring to the weak impertinence of a native.

"Damn it!" he muttered in his beard, "I should have known better; a fellow in his shirt-tails can't stand up to uniforms even in private."

In a word, he saw himself as he was, and his enemy as he might have been: one of those men who carry their middle-age so easily—the sort that throws off or pulls through illness to which fellows of bulkier physique succumb; a man with unsuspected reserves of endurance at call, who had repeatedly worn down younger and more muscular men upon the march, until at length "Justin's luck" had become a proverb with his mess.

"Ye don't answer me, I say! (Why the devil can't he speak?) snarled the sick man with the sudden impatience of an invalid. "I asked ye why ye have come to see me, eh?" (He had asked nothing of the sort, but was unaware that the question which was puzzling him had not passed his lips.)

"I beg your pardon; I assure you I did not catch what ye said. Silk scrapes so, ye know. Why?—well—my dear sir, because ye sent for me. Why else?"

"That's so; I did, begad," muttered the other.

"And now that I'm here what can I do for ye, or rather, what d'ye want me to do for ye?"

The distinction savoured of fineness, but the speaker was constitutionally wary; also he knew his man.

"'Twas monstrous good of ye to come," said the other, fencing the question. "Considering the terms we have been upon, I never thought to see ye under my roof. My roof!" His eye roved over the walls and floor: a slipper too small for a man's use lay in a corner. "Custom of the country, Justin, but 'tis the very devil. Ye did well to stick to your bachelor quarters; what with the women, and the children (what on earth is a gentleman to do with a brown family at Home?—or here?) and the debts (this place is mortgaged for more than it will ever fetch. That is why the sowkar fellow don't foreclose). Ye'll be saying 'What has the man done with the pagodas?' Phew! they simply went. You are going Home, they tell me" (a keen, veiled glance went after the words), "but there's no going Home for me: the only way out of it is to die of it, sir; yes, die out of it and cheat the sharks. And that is what I'm doing as fast as I can." His voice

slowed down to a husky whisper, his face turned from his visitor, his hand went creeping out to that box upon the table within reach. Justin, with pity in his fine face, saw what was coming, and frowned slightly as his comrade of other years, his commanding officer and enemy since, swallowed the drug which had ruined him, but without which he was now incapable of concentrated thought or continuous conversation.

In another minute he was another man: his eye filled, his voice gathered volume, there seemed less languor or more purpose in his attitude.

"*Why* did ye come?" he asked again; and this time there was a depth of crafty undertone which did not altogether escape the man he addressed.

"Are Plassy men getting so common?" began Justin, but the other broke in:

"Pélasi? I'm not quite the last. There's Rumbold. You are to carry his despatches, I hear. He must have granted you an interview. You will have sate at his table, or will to-night before sailing? I thought as much!—and will drink his wine (as Stuart drank Pigot's the night he betrayed him). Your pardon; no offence! O yes, Rumbold is a Pélasi man, took his wound there. When he offers ye his hand presently, will it feel sticky? Mind ye, there's Pigot's blood between the fingers. *Ye know it!*" with sudden heat which as suddenly cooled. "Ah, Pélasi; yes, I was there." He drew deeper breath and for the moment looked almost noble. "You came out later, Wandewash was your first affair." Justin nodded. "But, Pélasi; there was never another battle like that in our time, or in any other, surely. 'Twas the beginning of it all. Hotter affairs perhaps, but we did know the odds and we didn't know the niggers wouldn't fight. And, as ye are thinking, we need not backbite one another, for there's mighty few of us left. Twenty years of the climate plays the deuce with a man's constitution. (It hasn't touched his, begad!) Ye are pitying me. I swear I will not be pitied; d'ye hear me? Tut—tut! Your pardon's begged, 'tis part of my complaint—physical, purely physical. A damnable habit, this, ye are thinking," he tapped the box, "and the fellow is a slave to it, a man that was once a fine soldier, but, damme, what would ye have me do? It will be the death of me, I grant ye; but to swear off is past mortal endurance. (Does he think I've not tried that he looks at me like that?) I learned the trick from him, a man if ever the Almighty made one, but it gripped him; I'm told he's dying."

Justin divined that he spoke of Clive, and that he had not heard of his death. The invalid seemed exciting himself, talking against time, nerving himself for a task to which he

found himself unequal. There was nothing for Justin but to await the man's pleasure: he had his own hand to play later.

"There were sixteen of us at the council of war in the tope before the action," muttered Travis. "As junior I had spoken first. 'Attack at once!' was my word. Coote smacked his thigh and backed me when his turn came, but the Chief was cold. Fifty-three heavy bullock-guns served by French are brutally heavy odds against six little brass field-pieces."

Still Justin waited and watched for an opening. How the man had fallen! It was three years since Colonel Travis had sent in his papers. Not a day too soon; a day sooner would have been better for a reputation which had then escaped the smirch of a distressing failure of nerve upon the occasion of a Moharrum riot; a failure sudden, abject, irrecoverable, such as lies in wait for the victims of the drug. Since that day the regiment had never beheld the face of its former commandant.

That Justin had seen nothing of him meanwhile was not surprising. It was many years since the men had been upon any but service terms. They had messed together, fought and marched in company without exchanging a word that was not demanded by the exigencies of their duties. All this had been notorious to their subalterns and colleagues who had amused themselves with watching Travis's bitter but impotent malice, and the cool, deferential displeasure with which Justin held his enemy at arm's-length. The trouble, whatever it was, had begun when the men were subalterns, had continued whilst they commanded opposite wings, and in no way had abated when one was promoted to the colonelcy, nor when that brief period of command had closed in disgrace.

Whatever had been the opinion of the mess in the old days, the sympathy of his fellows had for long been accorded to the man who in a difficult position had borne himself with dignity, and had never been known to speak ill of a persistent traducer.

"Yes, I sent for ye—(didn't think for a moment he'd come, though)—sent for ye, Justin, to ask ye a plain question—or it might run to two."

It was coming then, coming at last. Major Justin's eye was upon his interrogator. He signified assent by a grave, silent inclination.

"Why didn't ye send your cartel? The mess expected it of ye?"

"Neither you nor I, Travis, have at all times governed ourselves according to the opinion of the mess."

Travis's eye contracted, he sucked in his moustache. ("A compliment paid to himself and a back-hander for me. He was always my master in repartee, damn him!") he muttered; then aloud, "I repeat, why didn't ye send me your friend?"

"When?"

"When! he says 'when.' Curse ye, sir, ye shall not fence my question! *When*, indeed! Well, after Wandewash."

"The circumstances of that affair, Colonel Travis——" began Justin, weighing his words; but the other took him up impetuously.

"The circumstances of that affair are not unknown to me, sir. You saved my life. Have I ever repudiated the service? That I bitterly resented it, and do still resent it, is beside the mark. Enough that ye put it out of my power to send my friend to you. But I had given ye ample occasion before that affair, and have, as I think, given ye enough since, to justify ye in seeking, or seizing, or making—have it your own way—a path out of an impossible position. And now ye are going Home. (The fellow thinks to see her!)—and will see *her*." The voice ran up into head-notes, the face grew distorted with passion, the fingers of the left hand contracted, but the hidden right hand, which Justin now suspected to be paralysed, lay motionless under its wraps.

"Her—*her*," he repeated himself with a smack of the lip and facial contortions painful to witness.

"Colonel Travis," interrupted Justin, rising, "I have entered your house at your particular request, upon a matter of business—you expressly wrote 'business.' But there are matters which I cannot and will not discuss with ye."

"You shall, sir. You shall pledge me on the Gospels that ye will neither——"

"Not another word, sir——"

"Neither see the woman nor communicate——"

"I beg to wish ye a good-day," interposed Justin rapidly, his hand upon the hanging chick in the doorway.

"Cross that threshold at your peril, sir. I mean it!" cried the sick man, with a kind of breathless savagery, sitting suddenly up and whipping a pistol from under that shawl with his hitherto concealed right hand. "She is my wife still," covering his man with his weapon at the toise. "Swear! I say, swear! Down on your knees, sir. I'll give ye whilst I count five. One—two—three! Swear, ye fool! . . . or I blow the brains out of your head—*four—fi——*"

The explosion in that confined space seemed to lift the ceiling; smoke filled the room, through which Justin, still standing, saw his would-be murderer drop the smoking barrel and wring his pistol-hand with a gesture of pain for a moment ere he snatched a phial from beneath his pillow. He divined that the man was about to destroy himself. In two strides he was beside the couch and had taken the phial from the nerveless fingers that held it, and was bending over his enemy

The wretch fell back, bleating hoarsely: "Let me die! You are the better man—always were. Ye have me all round. To miss such a mark!—overcharged, of course; the thing threw high and has gone near to breaking my wrist." He lay back gasping and whimpering, a deplorable spectacle. Justin, standing over him, had released his enemy's wrist; straightening his back, he drew three long breaths, collecting himself and counting. When his voice was steady enough he spoke.

"Travis, listen to me, recollect yourself, sir; I have news for ye. Is it possible that ye have not heard? Have ye no correspondent in England? None? Good God! Then ye did not know that your wife has been dead these twelve months."

The speaker's voice, well governed as it was, had a husky break in it; but his eye carried conviction.

"Dead? What d'ye mean? How? When?— Begad, a minute back I'd not have taken it from ye. Dead? Are ye sure? But why didn't ye say so before I fired?"

"You would not have believed me; ye own as much. But I knew it, and besides——"

"Besides what? Ye saw my hand shaking? It was *that*. The fellow sees what a wreck of a thing I am got to, and prefers to stand his chance, begad!—He was safer so than on the move, by the Lord! And I could snuff a candle with the hair-trigger in my time."

Justin looked down upon this spectacle of ulcerated vanity with disgust. What held him there? It would seem that he had something to ask in his turn, and that the moment for asking it had come.

Nineteen men out of twenty would have been hurried by emotion into hasty action of some sort by such an outrage as this to which he had been subjected. He had been enormously surprised, and his pulses were still hammering, for even an old soldier, habituated to the ruses and night alarms of eastern warfare, cannot look into a loaded barrel for five seconds without a shock; but the resolution which had held him rigid before that barrel, lest by rash movement he should convert to a catastrophe what he hoped was but a threat, kept him steady in the dangerous moment of reaction. He saw his game clearly now; reproaches would spoil all; he was experiencing the elation of the player who sees that a slip of his opponent has given him mate in three moves.

Vacant apathy had followed the anguish of chagrin. The crash of the discharge had been succeeded by the breathless silence of a listening household, encroached upon now by the stealthy rustle of approaching garments and the pit-a-pat of unshod feet: the chicks were separated by brown fingers, but

Justin gave no heed to anything but the supine figure upon the charpoy moving uneasily beneath his eye.

"Go now in the devil's name! I have failed again. I always do fail where you come in; always have. Now go. Isn't it enough to have scored the last trick of the rubber? 'Tisn't like you, Justin, to stand there watching me wriggle like a broken-backed snake. Be off, I say; tell any tale ye like to the Fort; say I was drunk, or had taken drugs (ye saw me take the stuff); tell 'em I am mad, if ye like: only go! Ye were a fool to come here to tempt me; 'twas all I wanted ye for."

"But not all I want of you. Come, Travis, ye'll admit ye owe me something. I had hoped when your message came—had fancied—'fore Heaven, man, I find it hard to refer to her in your presence. She is with God. What of the children?"

"*Yours?*" whispered the other with the spite of a chained fiend.

Justin's mouth tightened for an instant, but as soon relaxed. "That stab comes twenty years too late. You can't hurt me, man, nor her any more. Ye know that I know; and I know that you know; why keep up the pretence?"

"Jealousy, my infernal jealousy," whined the other.

"There were children when ye sent her home, a boy and a baby girl. They'll be grown-up by this, though 'tis hard to believe it. What have ye done—what are ye doing for them? Come, there is yet time; take the right-hand turn at this last, and permit me to help ye."

"*You?*" Those rugged black brows lifted in sheer amazement; the question, considered as a word, was unpromising, but the tone raised Justin's hopes.

"And why not I?"

"But 'tis incredible. Ye never mean——"

"But 'tis just what I do mean. I ask ye to believe that it shall be my duty, my pleasure, my privilege to seek them out; yes, I'll say it—as their poor dead mother's early friend, Travis—to assist them, if they need it. And if you, even now, Travis, would use me as your servant—in this particular, mind, in this particular. Think man, otherwise I come to them unavouched, a stranger; but a line from you, some personal trinket, a signet with your crest for the lad; your sword; money if you are able—they may be in want."

The men's eyes met in a long look; the Major's overcame. He knew that he had scored again.

"'Pon my life, Justin, ye are the most wonderful fellow in India; I rob ye of——"

"Say no more, Travis, I beg!" cried the conqueror, with low vehemence, his lip a-tremble.

"But I will say it. Have not I led ye the devil of a life; aye, for twenty years; kept ye back in the service; injured your name?"

"No, Travis, not that."

"But I did my worst. Jealousy, sheer jealousy! Yes, and inveigled ye to this room and sent a bullet point-blank at your head. (And he stands there and asks me to appoint him trustee for the children. My God!)"

"And you will do it."

"Gad, then, I suppose I must," whimpering weakly. "Give—Gi——" the capacity for connected speech was ebbing from him, the dim eye roved, the hand went exploring in the direction of that fatal box.

"What, again?" protested Justin, dreading a second resort to opium; but the other lay gasping and collapsed as if at the point of death. It was of the first necessity that he should live through the next ten minutes. The shuttered room seemed stifling him: his guest glanced at the idle punkah.

"No use . . . she stopped it . . . to listen better," whispered the ostensible master of the house with scarcely moving lips. "If I mayn't have my drug, give me my dram," he pleaded, indicating the bottle.

Justin, wary as ever, drew the stopper and sniffed; the peculiar aroma of aniseed reassured him: it was native-made rack. Travis gulped the spirit, smacked his lips feebly; and was presently as much of a man again as he ever would be.

"See here, Justin, ye must know, for 'tis servants' *gup*, that I'm a squeezed lime. That prize money? the mohurs? Gone! This woman keeps me, not I her: the land, this bungalow, and all that's on it, are hers; or, well, his who can first get in and keep in when I'm gone, as I shall be presently."

"Man, where's your nest-egg?" asked Justin bluntly, who had listened to this sort of thing from dying lips before in his time, and judged by the penitent's shifty eye that it was with him as with others: there would be at the Ca Sao Thomé some secret hoard well hidden from dusky housemates, but available for momentary use at a pinch.

"(Must I trust this fellow?)" Travis muttered into his beard. "(It seems so.) D'ye see that brace of pistols on the wall there?" He caught his breath with an eye on the hanging chick in the doorway. "They should be cased, of course, but I like 'em better so; they've hung there this many years; handy, ye understand. Native servants all thieves. Well," a long pause, "ye may take 'em to the children from their father."

Justin glanced across the room. The weapons were holster arms of the ordinary service pattern of the day; he lifted them from their hooks and weighed them in hand in turn, watched furtively by the other from under drooping lids, his purpose already wavering.

"For her children, one apiece, as they are, mind, as they are," the invalid gasped breathlessly, pinning himself to a purpose he feared to fall back from, and already to all appearance far down the hill there is no reclimbing, but in reality simulating greater weakness than he felt.

"These," said Justin with meaning, "are loaded. I am in a borrowed saddle this afternoon, a civilian's saddle, without holsters. Will ye send these to my——"

"I will not, sir. Have I not this moment committed them to your own hand? What the devil——?"

The Major laid the weapons upon the foot of the charpoy. "Ye must trust me, Travis. What are the charges?"

The sick man agonised dumbly for a minute. It was the bringing to the birth of the most shameful secret of a shameful life.

"Gems," said he evasively; "just gems, nothing more."

"Not the lost loot—the Bexwara loot?" said Justin just above a whisper, and tingling, for this touched his own honour, and the honour of his regiment. The question jumped from him, the final result of long, unconscious brain-work upon his part, and when it fell from his lips was as great a surprise to himself as to the man whom he questioned. He would have called it an inspiration.

"Confound ye! No! Certainly not! How dare ye insult me!" replied Travis, making some futile effort to assert himself; but under the dreadful, unwincing scrutiny of the eyes of the man upon whom he had years before vainly sought to fasten the stigma of his own theft, his nerve finally failed. Some heart trouble made him clutch his breast and gasp feebly for relief. He believed himself in the article of death; the whole inner structure of deceit broke up with him; necessity to confess to some one was the one overpowering sensation. The pang passed; he lay white and collapsed; his eyes opened and met Justin's with a new expression. "Gad, I'm too far gone to keep it up any longer. Some of the stuff might be; and then again it isn't. Yes, then, yes!" heaving his secret off his bosom. "Have it your own way if it pleases ye to clear yourself at the expense of a dying brother officer!"

"Travis!"

"O, you'll be a rich man now, worth a plum. 'Tis all yours; there isn't a man in the present officers' mess, nor a

sergeant, nor a private who was in that affair, only you and I. Take the beastly things and keep them if ye will, but keep your mouth shut until I'm gone."

"Travis, how could ye? No, I'm not thinking of myself. I was able, praise God, to clear myself. That charge never stuck as some of yours did (none permanently though, all forgotten). But this wasn't like you; think, the regiment——"

"Don't look like that! Take your eyes off me, sir, I tell ye! Our fellows? They took their chances, I took mine. They are dead and gone, every man jack of them. (Oh, I give ye my word I've kept count.) The affair lies between our two selves. Besides, these are not merely the N'wab's State housings; it is less simple. Some of the stones I came by fairly, some of the others I passed one at a time when on leave in Calcutta. I made a mixed-up matter of it from policy. I swear I could not separate the things now myself, nor could any man living. Ye must take to the business as it stands: keep the stuff or hand it over to the brats."

Justin paced the length of the room softly, his hands behind his back, considering his position and duty in the light of this amazing revelation. The pistols lay where he had placed them. The wretch upon his charpoy muttered on and on. "The grandest jewels, Rutnapura gems, Mysore carbuncles, and some pigeon-blood Burmese, the finest of all. There's more than one six-carat stone among them, but I've never dared offer them to a sowkar by way of raising money on them: too many of 'em are named stones, known by repute, at any rate, to every goldsmith's bazaar in Southern India. Paris the only market for 'em; and how was I to get away without ready money? . . . up to my eyes in debt since I was a subaltern. I swear I've applied for long leave a dozen times, or thought about it; but some damned thing came between every time. See now, over a year ago I thought all my plans were laid; but just in the very nick that infernal kite Rumbold swoops upon the French factories; no Paris for me! Then my heart gave out, and here you have me.

"The Colonel shouldn't have shown 'em to us—you and me, ye remember, none else. The sight of that big ruby, the 'Heart of Rama' the natives call it ('tis there somewhere; I've not dared to look at it for years past)—the very glow of the thing, I say, was enough to turn the head of an archbishop. But it didn't turn mine, at first, that is. 'Put them under guard, sir,' I said (ye remember), but the fool must needs keep them in his quarters over-night, the N'wab's house, a ramshackle native palace. 'The best guard for stuff like this,' says he, 'is to let no one know ye have it.'

"Poor Challoner! dead on his bed next morning, a frightful object, a pitch-plaster over his mouth and a knife-wound in his heart; and the loot gone. Not a soul of us had heard a sound, not a sentry had seen any one pass the lines. You remember how we turned the place upside-down, but found nothing."

"How then?" asked Justin, turning upon his heel.

"I'm coming to it. Ye shall know everything; and when ye do ye shall judge whether I, or the man ye are to dine with to-night, comes out best; there's no blood between my fingers; I never harmed any man but yourself. Loot? What is loot? I'll take my oath that the stuff in those barrels was come by more cleanly than Pigot's big diamond that he bragged so about, or those mortgages that cost him his life. Listen now. (The loot was gone, absolutely gone. Ye admit so much?) I had taken my turn at rounds that night. A white full moon it was, an impossible time for surprise or robbery: it made us all careless. One could see a jackal cross the road at a hundred paces; the brute's coat might not show, but his shadow did, skating on the white as black as ink. It struck me that our horse-lines were restless. The beasts had had a hard day of it and should have been quiet, yet here one and there another blew, half arose, and lay down again. Then one near the well got to his feet with a plunge and snorted; I heard him lash out, his shoe shone in the moon like silver, and the blow sounded dull, as if it had got home. There's something wrong, thought I, and went to see. There, close to the brute's heels lay a man, flat upon his face, as he had been caught by the hoof whilst wriggling down the line upon his belly in the shadow cast by the horses. He was stone dead, his temple driven in, stark naked, greased all over, a professional thief, as I took it, a *bichri* between his teeth, and close by his hand a little tight bundle—these. The Bexwara loot, ye'll say. But were they? That is exactly the point. There ye have it. The regiment had lost something, I own; and I had found something, I'll admit. Mind ye, 'twas impossible to identify; the thief had broken everything out of its setting, ye remember. 'Twas a parcel no bigger than a goose-egg, just loose stones; and whose? Tell me that! That was precisely the question. You might have answered it in one way, I answered it in another. I took that dead nigger by his top-knot, dragged him two steps to the well-side, and dropt him in. The stones were mine, and they *are* mine. Give them to me. I've changed my mind, I tell ye."

The miserable wretch had slipped back to his normal self: half arising, he made a feeble snatch at the pistols where they

lay at his feet; but another spasm seized him, he fell back gasping; the attack passed, he lay panting.

Justin, without replying, was trying pens; the other, regaining self-control, nodded.

"Ye play for safety. I don't blame ye. An authority is what you want; word it your own way, but make it irrevocable, for there's a devil on the watch behind that chick, and there'll be seven at my elbow directly. ('Pon my soul, I doubt it he wins clear of the bungalow as it is; he won't if they have an inkling of what he carries.) Be quick with it, man, and make sure work, for the yellow Jezebel that owns me will twist the whole story out of me to-night, and I shall find myself denying everything I've told ye, petitioning the Governor, memorialising the Honourable Court by the next mail; so make it a tight deed of gift, and be quick, man, quick, for I'm sinking."

Justin did not reply; his pen moved sedately; the result lay boldly legible, free from blot or interlineation. He read: "I, Maurice Fane Travis, late colonel of the Honble. East India Company's thirty-ninth regiment of foot, herewith give and make over absolutely and irrevocably, of my own free will and motion, to Wade Justin, major of the above regiment, two pistols with their charges, supposed to be gems, but at this time of giving unexamined and unverified by the said Justin, to have and to hold, use, convert, sell, exchange, or realise, as he may think fit, in trust for my two children lawfully begotten of my late wife, Agatha Travis, born Draycott; to wit, Draycott Sigismund Travis and Susan Agatha Travis, or the survivor of them, in equal shares, or, failing either of them, to the Honourable Court of Directors of the East India Company; and this deed I execute at my own house called the Casa Sao Thomé, near to Fort St. George, Madras City, this 14th day of June in the year of our Lord 1778." He read it slowly through to his man aloud.

"Now, Travis, your name to this." He offered the pen.

"Gad, Justin, ye should have been something better than a major of foot. What a headpiece! and 'tis me ye have to thank. Clive would have sent ye on political service once, but I put my spoke in. This must be witnessed, ye are saying? He poised the quill doubtfully, but Justin's prompt initiative left him no time for repentance. In response to his clap there was a scuffling behind the curtain as of an eavesdropper rising from the floor; the hangings rustled; a woman filled the doorway, tall and stout, bold-eyed and sullen and but half-veiled—no woman of the south, but a pure-blood Rohilla, stolen years since in some Mahratta raid, a promoted slave

since. At her master's bidding she approached and was told what was required of her.

"What is he making thee do?" she asked insolently, hardly caring to hold in place with her teeth the pretence of a veil. Her black eyes moving from host to guest in doubt, rested at length upon the paper; she pouted; her brown, many-ringed fingers twitched.

"Have a care; she will tear it," said her master softly, but, as he spoke, the woman pounced; Justin, forewarned, adroitly caught her wrists; she flung herself upon the floor shrieking.

"What am I, and what have I done that my lord hates me, then? What is it that he is giving to this Kaffir? Ai! ai! light of my eyes, hast thou not told me a thousand times that he is sheitan? Is there not blood between your houses? Is this not he of whom my lord talks in his sleep, whom he curses when drunk? Has it not been 'knife him!' 'shoot him!' 'poison him!' 'strangle him!' all these years? And now, whilst my lord lies here weaker than a new-dropped kid, this budmash rides to his door and strides in boldly and bids him sign his living away, and calls me—*me*—to set my signet to the theft! Thou knowest the house is mine, and the other houses, and the garden beside the tank, and the small field with the well: all mine!" She rushed into domestic details, until breath failed. "Sign?" she shrieked, "I will cut off my hand first!" and struggled lithely, snapping at the restraining fingers with betel-stained teeth.

Justin, as ill-placed as a guest might be, turned to his host a glance of mute reproach, and detected a fleeting smile of cynical amusement flicker beneath the moustache before the man aroused himself to turn upon his housemate a jet of vile abuse.

"Fool, beast, daughter of a noseless mother, low-caste Afghan! did not I buy thee, a starved little slut, from an up-country horse-dealer for a spavined Gulf Arab and a keg of Government powder? One word more of this and I will sell thee to grind *dhall* for a black Malabari Jew!"

The paroxysm subsided; she listened through her sniffs to a brief imperative order, couched in vernacular terms of untranslatable vigour, and prepared herself to obey. Her master, seeing her hesitate, deigned to protest, as Justin saw when the man upon the charpoy joined his finger-tips above his heart and flung them wide again with an oath. Not that the woman believed him; crouched upon the matting, her shoulders still heaving, her cloudy eyes exploring her master's face, it was plain that she thought him lying, but, feeble as he seemed, who could gauge the limits of his

authority? Not a curtained woman, who in her time had seen high-handed doings behind the purdah, and was not prepared to push matters to extremes with this strange, fierce, white lord of hers. There had been a shot but a minute before—fired by whose hand? and at whom? The smell of gun-powder smoke still hung in the room and frightened her, for, east or west, a woman is afraid of a gun. She trembled in the presence of the unknown.

In a word, race told; her sex and a servile life hampered her will as her *sari* clogged her limbs. Getting to her knees, she inked the bezel of her thumb-ring, and impressed the paper as directed by Justin's finger.

"Go, now, my heart," murmured Travis. She arose and went, hanging her head like a whipped child and sulkily dragging her feet.

Once more, and for the last time, the men looked into one another's faces. It was Travis who broke the silence.

"You have never asked me why. Ye have the right to ask——"

"I'll not pretend to misunderstand ye, Travis, but why distress yourself further? Ye have made amends; ye are ill and low. I freely forgive ye."

"But, begad, I'll not be forgiven by any man alive, sir, and ye *shall* know. 'Twas jealousy, my confounded jealousy; but had I no excuse for——?"

"Stop man, I beg."

"Ye loved her."

Justin winced at the thrust as he had not winced at the shot. The paper he was folding shook, his eyes blinked rapidly, his lips were sucked in and held for a moment, then he was himself once more, and spoke.

"I did, and do," he murmured in accents that seemed to trickle from his very heart.

"Yes, Agatha married the wrong man—the wrong man!" muttered Travis, with black brows drawn down over closed eyes.

There was silence in the room before the other spoke again.

"Travis, I am waited for; I must be going, but, before I go, touch my hand. I have my confession to make too: I did not know it until this minute; but I do believe I have been hating ye."

"Singular way of showing it," whispered the other with an infinite weariness as the hands met that had not met for twenty years.

Justin arose; it was time for him to be gone. Strange for a man who had lived so frugally, and knew himself to be as poor as he knew himself to be, to have refused two fortunes

within an hour, a bribe and a gift, and to have had a third confided to him in trust.

At the compound gateway he walked into the arms of Old Chisholm leading a band of his household armed with *lathi* and tulwar to the rescue of his friend, precisely as his father, in like emergency, would have gathered and led his tail.

"The Lor'rd be thankit!" exclaimed the old fellow piously; "I opined . . . I heard . . . I suspeckit the warst." He paused, out of breath with his haste, and wiped steaming brows. "Yer *ghorah-wallah* here gave us the alairm. 'They are shooting my sahib,' says he; so I juist raised ma people and pit ma best fit foremost——"

"A thousand thanks, old friend! 'Twas like you. I appreciate it none the less that it happens to be needless. Ibn Ali has nerves; a good horse-boy, but——" he treated the man to a warning look.

"But the shot, man?"

"Who says there was a shot? I seem to have missed that part of the performance, or it missed me. A shot, was there? I have forgot the shooting." He had the old man by the arm, and was getting him off the premises as he spoke. There should be no scandal.

"*Forgot?*" cried the other incredulously. "Weel, 'tis nae affair o' mine as to whilk fired at wha. . . . *Forgot?* Ye, at least, cairrit nae airms. 'Tis easy to see that ye are nae hielan'man; we ha'ena the trick o' forgetting (or forgiving) ayont the hielan' line. Man, Justin, ye haf a braw convenient memory!"

"For a friend, Mr. Chisholm, and for the children of a friend."

"I haf nane, waur's the luck!"

"I was not thinking of yourself at the moment, old friend, but of the little laddie and lassie who sailed sixteen years ago with that man's wife. He is bedridden, he is far gone in his drugs; testy and fractious and suspicious, let us say. Shall we lose ourselves in wonder at that?"

"But the shot, man?"

"Well, the shot, if there were a shot—am I the worse? Suppose something went off, will it be the first time that I have been under fire? Nor shall it be the last by many, as I hope, for the Company has not seen the back of me yet."

"The villain!"

"But the children, Chisholm. Listen! I have news for them, a message from their father, his first, as I think; and with what sort of grace should I deliver it if I had spent my last hours here in laying informations, suing out process,

which, as ye know very well, I have not time to prosecute? Or would ye have me asking for protection, of which I stand in no kind of need? No, Chisholm, it would not help me with the son and daughter to have blackened the name which they must bear."

"Ye haf the tongue of the auld serpent, Justin."

"And besides all this, we have shaken hands upon it——"

"The teffle ye haf? Yer han'!—that's the end o't."

"I hope so. It was what I came to the Ca Sao Thomé for; I proposed to myself no less."

"Major, on my sawl, I thenk ye are juist the maist wonderful man in India!"

The Major laughed again, for he had heard the same thing quite recently.

BOOK II

THE CHANCES OF THE ROAD

CHAPTER I

MORALISINGS UPON A HAIR TRUNK AND OTHER THINGS

EVERYTHING must begin somewhere, an elementary proposition to which this section of my story offers no exception. Let it begin, then, in the gray of a winter's morning in a little low-ceiled attic in an old house in the one walled city which England can show. The sun is still abed, the crumbling red pinnacles of the cathedral over the roofs there are still unwarmed, but a pink cloudlet floats high in the ether, an angel, maybe, soaring homeward after a night's watch beside some nervous child.

The attic is poorly lit, a blind is drawn across the hasped lattice, the day of free ventilation is still afar. Not that the room is close, an open chimney attends to that, a bold square of brickwork wherein young swallows twitter in July, and which admits a narrow splash of midsummer sun half-way down to the hearthstone. Upon this hearthstone lies something, which, as the light gains, we see to be a hair trunk. And now I am wondering how many of my readers have ever seen and handled such a thing. The fashion of this world passeth away; expansive novelties, French and native, portmanteau and valise, the Gladstone and kit-bag have taken its place; American notions have ousted it from favour, the hand-grip, the steel-bound Saratoga elevator-breaker and what not. Where shall the trustees of the Pitt-Rivers collection put finger upon an example to-day?

Yet I bethink me that in a certain lumber-room that I wot of lies the last of the breed. It is twenty-three inches in length, fifteen in breadth, and eleven in depth, counting-in the arch of the lid. Thin, well-seasoned wainscot is the foundation—oak was native and cheap a century since, deal

a foreign wood, dutiable and dear, not to be had for years together when Norway was closed to us by war (and what His Majesty's dockyards did for mast-timber in those years Heaven only knows; took a ship or two from the French, possibly, as wanted). Oak, then, is my trunk's substance, lined with ancient news-sheets still displaying ruddily the Government stamp. Externally it is covered with red calfskin in the hair, glued fast to the wood, and bound thereto with strips of leather, and nailed over all with a multiplicity of those dome-headed brass nails which were taxed so heavily because so much in demand for trunks and coffins, things which each member of the taxpaying class must needs use—this in active middle life, and the other at its end. My trunk is secured by hasp and plate, a wrought-iron chest-handle hangs at either end, and upon the bow of the lid within an escutcheon of nail-heads appear the initials of my grandmother's maiden name in the same medium, for this absurd little box, look you, is the veritable going-away trunk with which she left my great-grandfather's door upon the day she married my grandfather. Impossible? Sober fact, my dear young lady, into these exiguous limits were pressed each and every garment—save those which she carried upon her pretty back—which my charming young ancestress possessed. Yes, a receptacle which no self-respecting scrub-lady of to-day would think half big enough for her frocks, was at that time held sufficient for the entire trousseau of a bride of substantial yeoman stock.

And this trunk upon the attic hearthstone is the very marrow of the one which I have in my eye, save in one respect—a detail this, the initials upon its lid; these, as one can make out in the growing light, are S. A. T., distinct and bright in brass that has yet to be battered with use, for this trunk is new and has made but one journey, to wit, from its maker's workshop to this room.

Meanwhile the light is gaining and we see more of the dusky little place; the dark oak planking is waxen smooth, and shows its figure where a pencil strikes through a rift in the window-blind. A tripod washhand stand occupies a dim corner, its ware as diminutive as you shall still find in some French auberge where the needs of English travellers are unknown. There is no bath: our ancestors held that a monthly tub-night upon the kitchen bricks was all that nature called for.

The recess between the chimney and the farthest corner of the room is curtained off, implying a bed; a diminutive square of drugget adjacent suggests a prayer-rug; there are garments upon a chair. The room will be occupied. Hark!

it is only the cathedral chimes ; wafted down the flue they come, the four quarters and seven booming shocks of ponderous bell-metal. Something stirs within the curtained recess, a little hand divides the hangings, a little face dazed with sleep is in the opening, a girl's face, still rosily reminiscent of the pillow, its fine oval framed in a mass of soft brown hair. The forehead is broad and rather low, the brows well marked and arched, the nose small and straight, the little chin cleft like a half-ripe peach that has yet to make acquaintance with the sun ; a good chin, an excellent chin, there being both firmness and sweetness indicated, and enough of both, as the red, young mouth would also attest, were it not now half open in the laxity of sleep, showing two rows of most desirable teeth. What, then, is wrong with this little face, for it lacks something of perfection ? Merely a birth-mark, a soft grey mole upon the upper lip, round and softly dusky as a mouse's ear—*myosotis*, they say, signifies Forget-me-not to a botanist, and shall to us, a parable, mind you—for this is less a defect than an aid to memory ; yes, one would hope to meet such a girl as this again, and to recognise her by this small, endearing personal trait. Meanwhile the lady is wakening, she rubs her eyes, yawns (oh, excellent white teeth, small and regular), but she is emerging, and we are trespassers, a hundred and thirty years and incorporeality notwithstanding, a maiden's bedroom is sacrosanct. We must begone.

An hour later when the clock is warning for eight and the first promise of the day is overcast, we go exploring up a cobbled street, darkened by the overhang of first floors and the cavernous gloom of their unlit "rows," in search of a hostel yard where stand coach and horses apparelled for a journey. Ahead of us goes a boy with that trunk, a vacant-faced human immaturity, such as God made him, quite unremarkable, a little scrubbed boy, pink-nosed, leathern-aproned : he shall not detain us. He enters the yard, reaches the booking-office, tugs at his forelock, mentions his mistress's name, lets down his burden with a grunt, rubs his shoulder and stands aside to watch the starting.

A lady approaches, tripping diffidently over the stones, attended by an older woman, a servant of some sort by her dress, who, by her dress again, is plainly not to travel. Her mistress is well-cloaked in duffel grey against the chill of the morning, veiled too, and wearing a little black poke bonnet, neat and serviceable, but heavy and warranted to give its wearer a headache before night.

The lady's seat had been booked these nine days ; she is expected. "Miss Travis, ma'am ?" inquires the guard,

touching his hat-brim with an ingratiating grin. The lady bows silently; tears are trickling within that veil, she does not trust her voice. The man opens the coach-door and lets down the step, elbowing aside a stable hand who is greasing the under-carriage after tapping home the lynch-pins.

"Ye'll be pleased to face the horses, ma'am? The ladies mainly does. And this'll be your trunk? I'll put it in the boot with my own hands, ma'am; ye need never give it another thought until we set ye down at Blossom's. Yer travelling reticule"—he took it from the maid—"I'll keep under my own eye ontill ye want it this night."

The lady bowed again and lifted her skirt to mount the step; the woman behind her sniffed; at the sound the mistress turned and, lifting her veil, bestowed a warm kiss upon the rough, red cheek which puckers with a sudden spasm.

"G-God-b-bless ye, ma pretty! ub-ub! And to lose ye just as ye're perfect in your stitchery! Heaven knows ye were always a wonder at yer sampler! ub-ub! And don't ye go for to forget the simples I've taught ye—fried mice for the whooping-cough, ivy-leaves laid to the wound for a bad leg in the elderly, and above all, in low spots where there might be a touch of the ague, a live spider taken in gin, ub-ub!"

The lady turned again and, taking the woman in her arms, kissed her frankly and hard upon both cheeks, now wet with running tears, to which her own were added, and, dropping her veil, sprang into the coach amid the sympathetic murmurs of guard and coachman.

The scene had been watched from the window of the coffee-room, where another traveller was getting into his coat. The man was very tall, and not only tall but massive and well-set-up—as fine a piece of humanity as you could wish to see; and though in civil dress, a soldier from his arched instep to the crown of his bold, well-poised head. Nor was the face at first sight otherwise than prepossessing: the nose, held at this moment rather close to the diamond pane, had just a hint at the forbidden upward curve, but seemed to claim it as its right, for was it not an Irish nose? The brows were thick and ruddy, the eyes beneath were a pair of dancing, hazel, Donegal eyes, alive with courage, high spirits, resolution, and sheer devilry. But the impression produced by the brilliant upper half of the countenance was marred by high cheek-bones and a heavy and over-prominent jaw which threw the mouth out of shape, giving to it the habitual, saucy, menacing smile of the prize-fighter. Such a mouth, with its challenge to man and woman, has ancestry behind it and a history before it. There have been men of old with just such

chins and mouths, great men, warriors and preachers, each good of his sort; yet does such a mouth need the very grace of God to keep it in order.

It would seem that the man with his nose to the pane had seen enough, for he straightened his back with a low laugh, clapping a black tricorne over a crop of dark chestnut hair that curled strongly at the temples and was elsewhere drawn back to form the queue.

"Faith, and I'm in luck's way again!" He struck his gloved hands together lightly. "The leedy is a gyurrl, and a young gyurrl at that, and has a heart, too, as I'm a gentleman. How will I be taking her?" (In a minute—"Get out wid ye, and close that door behind ye!") This to a waiter hovering, expectant of a vail which he was destined not to touch. He had proffered his help to the gentleman with his coat, but the gentleman would none of his assistance; as a last resource he apprised him that the coach was waiting. How the hint was received we have seen. Major Cornelius Boyle, late of the 41st, but at present unattached, and travelling under the name of Tighe, was not the man to accept a hint or to hurry himself for the convenience of others. The coach was waiting? Let it wait.

"'Tis the woundud hayro that'll be quickust to flutter the young female heart; and here he stands," said he; and whilst speaking unwound a black silk wrapper from his neck and improvised a sling for his right arm, winding hand and wrist in a coloured bandanna for picturesqueness—the man loved a touch of colour—and thus adorned presented himself at the door of the waiting coach hat in hand.

"Me mails are in the boot, gyard? I thank ye. Ah, and what do I see? Madam, I hope I do not intrude. Have I your permission to share the inside? Tighe, is my name, Major Tighe, madam, at your servus. I thank ye a thousand times; 'tis a liberty I am taking, of which I am sinsible. Had I but known in time I swear I'd not have encroached upon your privacy. I would sooner have postud, and would now, had not your greecious inclination made it evidunt that the prisince of a simple soldier would not be offensuv to ye."

Whilst apologising he was getting in, and was now disburdening himself of his lighter belongings assisted by the lady, in pity for his supposed disablement. He had seated himself beside her in the unavoidable proximity entailed by the straitness of the vehicle and the exigencies of his immense person.

Coachman and guard had watched the escalade with knowing winks: both knew something of the man, and were aware that he had bespoken the back seat which he was now occupy-

ing a week since, and after inquiries as to the status of his lady fellow-traveller.

Before the coach had cleared the arched entry 'twas noticed that the cavalier was attempting to engage the lady in conversation. Her veil was down.

The woman-servant watched the stage lurch out into the street, jolt over the ill-set cobbles, shave the bourne-stone at the corner, and pass out of sight. "Ma precious," she murmured, "Ma poor precious!" and wept afresh; then, finding the boy at her elbow, regarding her with one of boyhood's many exasperating forms of countenance, she took the urchin a small cuff o' the lug, bade him home to his knife-board, and followed his lingering footsteps.

The coach and its burden were gone, with crack of whip and blast of horn, as befitted King George's mails, but with poor results in the matter of progress. The roads of the eighteenth century were inconceivably ill-planned, ill-made, and neglected; travelling was tedious, comfortless, and dangerous. Overturns were of frequent occurrence, breakdowns still commoner. The Chester-to-London mail will have its minor adventure of the sort, and not a dozen hours after starting.

CHAPTER II

THE GRIFFIN AT MALBY CROSS

THE axle was sprung, a matter beyond the skill of the village wheelwright; a man should be fetched from Holtwich. The passengers must put up with the delay; a common accident of the road; it meant a night's lodging.

Their case might easily have been worse, the Griffin at Malby Cross was no mere change-house, but an inn of decayed respectability, a hostel that had come down in the world; like Mrs. Quickly, it had had its losses, but retained its self-respect.

Its landlady arose to the occasion; the resources available for unexpected guests were not too abundant, for the hamlet was small, and had it been thrice as large would have had no shop at that day. Flesh meat at such an hour was out of the question; the men were but just back from the field. Only in scriptural lands does one kill at a moment's notice; but poultry and eggs were to be had, and flitches hung plainly in view.

The young lady was making a poor supper; unused to travelling, the rough roads and the rolling of the stage had come near to turning her stomach; her colour had suffered; she drooped wearily, a pathetic little figure that appealed to all that was motherly in her hostess, a woman of forty-five, in widow's cap and rusty weeds, apple-cheeked, executive, who knew her world, ready with tongue and hand, strong as a man, a corpulent body upon active legs.

"Pick a little more, my pretty; ah, that's right, we're the better for't already. Now, sit ye back and rest yerself; 'tis too soon for bed, or I'd hap ye up with my own hands, I would. The road takes it sorely out o' them as is fresh to't. Bed? Yes, ye shall share mine, my dear," with a defiant smile over the heads of the men, "I'se warrant we'll have a good night on't. I'd bid ye into my private parlour this minute, but I've quality there as is no credit to itself or the Griffin, but such as a lone woman in the victualling must

stomach at times." She tossed back her cap-strings with an air of disdain, "The young squire, well into his second bottle; he with his head not half made."

Major Tighe had eaten heartily and desired a pipe, which was impossible in the presence of the lady, yet he could hardly find it in him to leave her to the society of the Third Passenger, a younger man than himself, small and awkward, for whom, despite the fellow's persevering silence, he had conceived an active dislike. The dashing Irishman had proposed to himself some diversion upon his journey; four or five days of enforced companionship with a girl, young, pretty, and unchaperoned, suggested opportunities. The scheme had miscarried almost at the outset. At the second change-house south a third passenger had been awaiting the mail, or rather had run up and taken a seat at the instant of starting. Never was man less welcome; the newcomer's taciturn presence had contributed nothing to the life of the day, but had chilled the gallantries which the Irishman had relied upon to while away the tedium of the journey; for the Major was the man to improve his opportunities with the sex with encouragement or with none, and could hardly be thrown into the company of a woman of any age for ten minutes without initiating some amorous advance.

He held this intruder responsible for spoiling his day. Dislike sharpens suspicion. Since the Major's tongue had been bound over to good behaviour his eyes had gone a-roving, and had brought him news that the Third Passenger's clothes had been built for a bigger man: the collar of the riding-coat bulged at the nape, its shoulders were over-square, its girth redundant. Even the montier-cap was too roomy for the head it covered; boots, breeches, and all, shared this fault of over-amplitude. "Have ye risen in the dark, sirrah, and exchanged clothes with yer elder brother?" had trembled upon the tip of a tongue unused to sparing the feelings of men; but the presence of the lady had restrained the jeer.

"Ecod! 'tis a poor creature, and cannot meet a man's eye at all; and fwhat, in the divil's name, is this figger-o'-spache for a man (wan that cannot for the life of him raise a decent shute of duds) doing in the inside of a stage? Him that should be upon the tailboard of a waggon, if indade he was not stipping it on his fit?" Thus he ruminated. "Come, sir," he said aloud, arising with exuberant courtesy when the hostess paused with her eye upon him (black it was, and as bold as his own), "'tis plain the leedy would prefer a little privacy; you and mysilf will be taking our tobacco ilswhere."

"Indeed, yes; and I am obliged to you, sir, for the suggestion," assented the anxious-faced passenger, with readier

speech than he had used all day. The door closed behind him. The Irishman, turning to follow, saw through the leaded panes a horseman dismounting in the inn-yard, and noted carelessly, and almost unconsciously, with that wary, soldierly eye of his, with what alacrity the ostler held his stirrup, and some touch of breeding in the carriage of the stranger; the next moment he had dismissed the incident from his mind and was in the bar parlour, his hostess bobbing before him with choice of long-stemmed clays whilst he plied her with conventional freedoms, jocosely parrying the maudlin rebukes of the young squireen. 'Twas no place for tobacco, nor was the bar, where three yokels discussed the points of a horse over their beer. He essayed the garden.

This was the inn's best point. The house, once of manorial rank, and still showing something of carven barge-boards to the village street, kept the best of its mullioned windows and pargeting for its garden-front. Here a flagged walk between borders of box led up to a bowling-green of the best, counter-sunk to restrain overcasts, its encircling ramp crested by such a yew hedge as only a hundred years of tendence will give; four flat green walls, their level summits crenellated at intervals by elephants, peacocks, mounted knights, and foresters with stiffly uplifted clubs.

"Some of Dutch William's work—the curse o' Limerick upon him!" muttered the explorer with questing eye on the lookout for shelter, for an occasional drop was falling. "Sure, there'll be a summer-house handy. Where ilse'll they keep their liquor cool?" He was thinking of the players who used the green on summer evenings, and paced the length of the alley to make good his prognosis. But shelter was none. He had reached the end, where two of the retaining walls of yew abutted upon an angle-bastion of the same, a huge beehive of a bush, surmounted by a lion, and was about to retrace his steps when his eye caught a narrow, diagonal exit, a sally-port piercing the enclosing hedge. He peeped; the beehive bastion was hollow; entrance was gained from behind, by a squint, as the church-builders of the past would have called it. 'Twas a topiarist's masterpiece, a triumph of dexterous cutting. Within this dim, green cell was a stone table, an oaken bench curved around it horseshoe-wise, lit by a couple of arrow-loops, as we name them when wrought in the stone curtain of some fortress of the middle age; scarcely visible slits upon the smooth outer face, but splayed within, and commanding this the bowling-green, that the outer side of its boundary hedge, a private garden given over to kitchen stuff, where the cabbage grew strong beneath aged pear-trees.

The explorer took his bearings, dusting the seat with a handkerchief which he unwound from his wrist; it had served its purpose, he would relax in private. "A quare, ould place and handy for hide-and-seek and sportings wid Amaryllus in the shade. 'Twill stand a spot of rain, too." The pipe drew, its lacquered mouth-piece went kindly with his tongue, the tobacco, being his own, was to his mind. The Major settled himself in his seat and fell a-thinking.

"A foine young gyurrl, and 'tis my own luck again and a thousand pities that she is as poor as mesilf, and no use to me at all. 'Strewth, I could have done with the creature oulder and uglier if she were heavy in the stocking. Ah me, a light fut is for a subaltern, but the heavy garter is the magnet for a man of forty. And me as near broke as iver I knew mesilf! Con Boyle, ye omadaun, yer hot blood'll be the spoilin' of ye yit! But that's moralisin', which same I've sworn off!

"To this gyurrl again—the creature as she stands; now, at her worst, isn't she just a woman? No more, maybe; but, faith, no less. And a woman and a fight are always worth the winning.

"'Pon me heart and loife, I believe I'm in for ut. She has looked at me—once. Not a challenge in form, but 'twill pass. There was fear and confusion in the eye of her; she gives me the merely civil yes and no; she declines to converse. What will I make of that now? Begad! 'tis a challenge! I pick up yer little glove, me leedy; ye shall look me full in the face wid admiration before we part; if, indeed, we do part! Ah, me heart, sorra an 'if' there is in ut, for short of three hond'rd a year (of which there's no sign), fwhat would Cornelius Boyle be doin' for long wid a slip of a colleen? Aye, though she were as sweet as sin itself? So, 'tis fixed, I open me tranches; but before I unmask me batteries there's this pestilent Third Inside to see the back of. How will I manage ut? 'Sir, two is company,' I'll be sayin'; 'maybe ye know the rest of the adage,' and from that to pulling the baste's nose and offerin' me cyard is but a stip. So that's settled, praise the saints!"

The man's resolve was taken; he was done with thinking, an exercise to which he was but little given. Truth to tell, Major Cornelius Boyle was not one whose memory hummed to him sweet and gentle airs. Love movements were there, but the man's amorous passages had hitherto ended unhappily; scene after scene of his life's comedy had failed in holding the house; again and yet again the curtain had been rung down amid hissing. Hence, this fellow, who feared little else, shunned his own company and never looked behind. Such livers in

the present live briefly and hard, storming across their stage, filling it with the sounds of stolen kisses, stamping, and the rattle of blows. Walk wide of such all ye who would love wisely and live long.

The Major had come to the end of his reflections and cast about for his next sensation. He had finished his pipe and turned the bowl under to knock out the dottle against the oaken seat, when a short, low sound in his neighbourhood arrested his hand. It was one of those small human noises which proceed from the region at the back of the face, and may mean much or little. In the present case the sound implied low spirits, or respite from recent anxiety, the listener knew not which ; but he did know that the grunt was nature's effort to lift a load off a burdened heart. Boyle was unhampered by scruples : here was pastime ready to his hand. Quick as a birds'-nesting schoolboy who hears a thrush go off, he silently turned upon his bench and set eye to the nearest embrasure. Advancing over the sodden turf, smoking as he walked, came the Third Inside, his head bent in thought. He paced slowly, nodding in time to his steps as does a pigeon, and, pigeon-like, turning in his toes and cooing dolefully between his whiffs. The man's clean-shaven mouth drooped at the corners, giving an elderly cast to a long-nosed face that had been but four-and-twenty years in the making.

The eavesdropper took his breath softly, watching the other with impatient contempt. "A mighty poor actor, bedad ! that cannot even soliloquise. I'll be booing him off the boards in a minute unless he can disburden his sowl better than this. Fwhat ails the cripple that he must come harassing the heart of a gintleman over his pipe and make no handsomer fist of his complaint than. . . . 'Pon me salvation, I'm inclined to the belief that he's wanted by some one."

To relieve the tension of his posture, Boyle straightened his back, and, as he did so, saw for a moment through the other slit the perspective of the rear of the hedge. More sport ! There, within less than three yards of the Third Inside was a man dogging his steps, parting with wary fingers the dense foliage between them, peeping and listening. This furtive watcher was dressed for riding ; he wore a long drab coat of light cloth, with shoulder-cape of the same ; his hat was a little tricorne with narrow brim, a size or so too big for his head, one that could be pulled down over the eyes at need, in the stress of a hard gallop ; it looked like a hunting-hat and one that had seen some wear. The face beneath it was ruddy with sun and wind, an alert, vivacious face, delicately featured, alive with pleasurable animation ; the eyes and the forehead were good ; the straight, thin-nostrilled nose was good ; the whole set and

make of the countenance spoke of descent, breeding, and character. Such a fellow might play the fool, aye, or the knave, if overdriven by fate, but could not, for the life of him, be a dolt or a nincompoop. A scholar he might be, or a soldier, or both; but whether with quill or steel, he would make his mark. Upon the whole, you would have preferred to have sided with rather than opposed him, for this youngster had the air of one who would stick to his friend and stand up to his enemy.

Boyle from his coign of vantage grasped the situation upon the instant. " 'Wantud,' did I say? And this, sure, will be the wan that wants him. Not but what this peeping and spying is monstrous ungenteel, not the thing to be after at all, at all. I must be seeing more of ut. And, who now——? Why, 'tis the man that was dismounting in the inn-yard when I was in the bar. And what has he to say to my man, and what will be the maning of *that*? " for the eavesdropper had halted among the cabbages, and, standing stork-like upon each foot in turn, had drawn off his jack-boots, and tucking one under either arm, was tripping upon his stocking feet lightly as a cat in the direction of the harbour. Next instant Boyle had lost him, then his passing figure darkened the entrance, the boots fell clattering; with a shout of laughter he had leapt through the squint in the hedge and had the amazed Third Inside in his embrace, whose grunt, half-uttered, changed in the utterance to the shrill squeal of a rabbit when the mouse-hunt has him below the ear.

"A poltroon after all, and wid a bad conscience," muttered the watcher, and strained eye and ear for the sequel.

"Tavy, by all that's holy! Tavy Baskett—Octavius Baskett, Bachelor of Arts of the University of Oxford, deacon in holy orders (or has it run to a priest's since last we met?). Another, yes, and yet another!"

The Third Inside, caught thus at a disadvantage and clipt in the closest of embraces, gasped, lost his pipe, lost montier-cap and wig (not even his hair was his own), and struggled bleating in the arms of his captor.

"Yah, yah, release me, sir! What does this mean? No liberties now. Don't know ye, I say, don't know ye? 'Nough and too much of this foolery!"

But the taller and lither man had not done with him.

"Not know your old friend, Tavy? For shame, man! Think again. Think of Shrewsbury School; think of the House; think of the servitors' table in Hall. Would it deny itself to its boyhood's crony? For shame, Tavy. I swear ye have gone near to break my heart."

He flung his man from him and stood back, having got the information he wanted: whilst straining his old comrade to

his bosom with his right hand he had felt him from shoulder to waist with light, rapid touches of his left, as Boyle did not fail to observe.

But the Reverend Octavius Baskett was unaware of this, and of much else which it behoved him to know. He reddened and stuttered with anger; his alarm, by virtue of the law governing the transformation of energy, had been transmuted to temper. "S-sir!—Gobblessmysoul!—*wh-hat d'ye mean?*—are ye in liquor? Admit as much and I may pardon ye. Monstrous! to be accosted, embraced in this vulgar, offensive manner, and by a person whom I have not the slightest recollection of. O, Lord! Dray, *don't*—put it up, I say, it might go off!" He dropped upon his knees covered by a pistol.

"*'Dray,*' did ye say, Tavy?" replied the other softly; "'tis your first true word, but if repeated will be apt to be your last. I would have ye forget my christened name and any other that that treacherous memory of yours may attach to me. What do I want with ye? Wait a bit; ye shall learn soon enough, but meanwhile, keep just so. Pontius Pilate! what a coward it is, and ever was! How oft have I, as a lower boy, seen ye kneel so, all along, yes, *te ululante virgato*, yelping until the roof of the big school-room rang whilst old Atcherley laid on. 'Twas a gracious spectacle for us fags, Tavy, to whom ye were a terror; spiteful to the weak, a craven to fellows of your size; as ye are still, I perceive. Don't wriggle so; there's no old Atcherley behind ye, and I have a difficulty in keeping ye covered (he was less thoughtful, as I seem to remember; *Jacobus plagosus!* How we loved him!")

"W-what d'ye want?" whined the other; but his master was not to be hurried.

"This sin of ingratitude grows upon ye, Tavy; 'tis one which the ancient Persians punished with impalement; which reminds me that ye have been playing for a stake, and a big one, though not the sort that Xenophon treats of. I wrote your verses and ye paid me with kicks."

"Not at Christ Church; we were the best of friends up at Oxford," pleaded the cleric.

"Acquaintance merely, Tavy, for ye were a third year's man when I came up, and were too deep in your divinity for me. But, if what I hear of ye is true, there has been some spiritual declension since ye assumed your holy office; eh, Tavy? Yet your lines have fallen in pleasant places: domestic chaplain to a viscount, preferment in view, a place of a thousand, merely a question of toadying and patience; and ye were great at both. But what do we find, my Tavy? Debts, borrowings from the butler, yes, and from the housekeeper and maids."

"Never! I swear 'tis false as perdition!"

"Swear not at all, Tavy, or at least save your oath until one perjury will cover the lot, for I've more in hand. What of those gems?"

"*Gems?*" echoed the kneeling man in a quavering voice.

"Yes, the gems, Oh, mine ancient comrade, the camei, the antiques, *commensale meo atque sodale!*"

"I—I know nothing about the things. It must have been somebody else. Why ask me? What is it to you? We were all searched, every one of us, even I myself, an indignity they should have spared my cloth, but I thought it right to offer to be subjected to it as an example to the men and maids, you know. O, *do* put that thing away!"

"All in good time, Tavy; but first tell me how comes it that you who were so forward, as you tell me, in offering your person and trunk to the constables, failed to regain the confidence of his lordship, and have had to leave Duddingstone?"

"I went from choice, I tell ye. Can't ye understand there might be unpleasantness with the household after such a mysterious affair?"

"Certainly; but as I hear, 'twas not the servants' hall alone that ye failed to convince. Why are ye not at Durham?"

"*Dur-ham?*" faltered the kneeling man, blinking painfully into that black barrel.

"Don't echo, Tavy, 'tis not done in polite society: I said Durham. When ye took your leave of his lordship ye gave him to understand that ye had accepted a post in the cathedral school. His lordship is not exactly a fool, and procured a warrant for your arrest and search as ye passed through York."

"Wh-a-at? Oh——!"

"Luckily for yourself, ye changed your route. Ye went neither to York nor Durham, but doubled south under a new name, and in layman's togs; as I expected ye would, Tavy. London, as I take it, seemed a surer market for your swag. Don't begin protesting: I have news for ye. His lordship's agent has tracked ye to Chester: he has men on this road. There is a Staffordshire warrant out for ye, which will be executed to-morrow so soon as ye pass the county stone. But cheer up, I'm your friend. Knowing all this, I say, I've rid north to head ye off (but for that sprung axle I doubt I should have been too late). Providence has work in store for ye yet, 'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!' The Viscount wants his *intagli*, not your neck in a noose; they will search ye, and if the things are found upon ye, ye will hang; if they are not, the men have orders to turn ye loose again."

"Is—that so?" burst from the lips of the wretch with a groan.

"Did ye ever know me tell a lie, Tavy? No, nor has any other man. Hence I am well served. Come and go as I will, not a wench nor ostler blabs. Why? I pay promptly and pay well; the King, God bless him!—slowly or not at all. And now hand over that belt—*that belt, I say*—the thing with the stones in it. What else? Quick with those vest-buttons, man; don't fumble so. This pistol of mine is a hair trigger and grows vastly heavy upon my finger with waiting. . . . Ah, that is better. Ye may rise."

Boyle saw a wash-leather belt change hands, and the pistol lowered, the master-thief pouching the booty with the nonchalant ease of a man used to the handling of valuables. The watcher moistened a dry lip. He was in fortune's lap at last: this must be the veritable Ned Repton, otherwise "The Scholar," a meteoric villain, the newest and most dreaded of the gentlemen of the road, and the only one of them who deserved the name; a felon, but a man of parts, whose superior education gave him an advantage over the plebeians of his profession, and whose command of information, no less than his astonishing fertility in disguise, had for months kept him out of the hangman's hands whilst placing in his own some of the best-filled purses of the travelling public along the Great North road.

Boyle's lips were moving noiselessly in self-communion.

"'Tis no mere pockut off the red, this, but a break. Will I be shooting now, or will I hold me fire and hear more? Holy Biddy, but 'tis a strong hand I'm dealt. There's lashins of money in ut and cannons all round the table. There's blood-money—when I can touch ut, for the rogue spakes truth, the King is dilatory in these little matters. But apart from the dirty guineas, there's the jools. I will be handing thim back to me Lord Duddingstone (whoever he may be, for I niver heard of him before this day). Put him at the worst: say the man is a pock-pudding Protestant Saxon, he can do no less than make me a handsome prisint and place his int'rúst at me disposal. But there again, what are his politics? A King's Friend would be the making of me, but the recomindation of a peer that had votud cross would do me no good at the Horse Gyards at all, at all. . . . What will I do? 'To shoot or not to shoot, that is the question,' as Othello says in the play; 'tis a poor light and a risk, for a ball is asily deflectud by any one of these twigs. Tear-an-ouns, I'm for thrying ut! *Per-dition!*'"

The man travelled armed, as did most at that time; his hand went to his pocket, paused and explored. His face fell in the darkness, for the pocket was empty, nor did a deep, slow curse ease his heart, for the fault was his own. The arms which he had been carrying all day were now, at moment of need, in the greatcoat lying across the bed in his chamber.

Next moment he was smiling again the self-confident smile of a bold, strong man. "'Tis a waker hand than I had thought ; but stap me vitals if I don't play out the deal."

He resettled himself to listen. There might be information worth the gaining. The men were talking again ; the ex-chaplain had risen to his feet, sniffing and grumbling his way back to composure ; his former victim, now his master, having gained his point and established his position, was for smoothing the ruffled feathers of a subordinate whom he intended to employ.

"Where did I learn of your—what shall we say ?—exploit ?—or fall from grace ? From the bills, Tavy. I have one about me ; see. Never tell me this is news to ye ! Here ye are : *'Stolen. The contents of a cabinet : sixty-one antique gems,'* follows the descriptions, well and minutely drawn up, by his lordship's own hand, as I guess. And, pray, my sapient friend, who is going to take these off your hands in the face of this ? "

"As precious stones, I conceive——"

"As precious stones they are scarcely worth carriage to London. Carnelian, agate, jasper, peridots, and Rhine-stones, all rubbish considered as material. Man, what wast learning up at Oxford ? 'Tis the workmanship——"

"Oh, don't tell me ! Of course I know all that. Wasn't I curator of the beastly things for two years ? But I tell ye they have a value, and a very great value too ; and to be robbed of them like this, and by an old friend"—he reddened and choked.

"Softly, Tavy ! We were never friends until now. I always swore I'd be even with ye for yur barbarities to me ; and now, as I live, I'm returning ye good for evil. But for me ye would have walked blindfold into the hangman's hands to-morrow, or say, by God's grace, ye had slipped past the traps and reached London (London was your mark—he thought to pass the swag in London, the ninny !)—Why, man alive, the first antiquary to whom ye showed the things would have holloed for a constable and lodged ye in the lock-up. I swear I have saved your life and shall keep the stuff as my honorarium."

"You thief !" snarled the cleric venomously.

"Get it out and ha' done with it, Tavy," replied the other with careless tolerance. "If I do well with the things (and I think to do well with them) I'll spare ye something, though I owe ye not a stiver—the boot is on t'other leg. I am puzzling my head where to place them. The market is most peculiar and limited. Jewels can be reset, recut ; they are money all the world over, but these ! Why, there may be twenty men in England, all told, who collect, and as many more who understand them, and abroad there is a Grand Duke or two, a dozen of cardinals and—the Jews, who would cozen ye out of the lot

for a couple of guineas or decline to touch 'em, and would do wisely, for these can never come into the market as they stand ; they must home to mother earth again, Tavy, for their character's sake, and trickle back from the Campagna and Sicily, one at a time, years hence, when the cry has died down and old Duddingstone is quiet in his coffin.

"No ; there is only one buyer at the moment, and that is old Duddingstone himself. And I need hardly say that ye can't approach him personally. I can ; and, as I have a bone to pick with him and his, I shall take over the business with the more zest. . . . But all that may take months, and one must live in the meantime." The voice dropped ; the listener strained eye and ear in vain.

Meanwhile the darkening, overcast sky, from which drops had been falling furtive and single as spies, kindled to a smoky wrath of sunset. The rough underside of the dun roof of cloud caught fire from a blazing west ; each red tile and chimney-stack glowed its minute, then dulled and darkened, and the show was over, wasted upon the three, mere men, untouched by the mute message from the heaven above them that found no answer within. The rain began again in earnest.

"I am getting wet," complained the ex-chaplain, an indoors man, with a peevish shrug.

"'Tis nothing ; and I've a thing or two to settle with ye that I had rather not broach within four walls. . . . Hup !" the man was getting into his boots again. "Well, if ye must be sitting, there's a covered seat within arm's-length of us."

Boyle was a man of action. To be caught in the act of espial by a ready rogue such as this, and shot like a polecat in a blind culvert, was not in his scheme of things. With surprising agility for such a bulky person, he silently whipped through the narrow opening and around the bush and into the outer angle formed by its junction with the hedge. Farther he durst not go in the failing light, lest the clatter of wet cabbage leaves or the snapping of some low-hung pear-tree bough should give notice of his passage. Thus far his movements had been screened from the confederates by the sounds of their own footsteps, and the patter of rain upon the garden leaves, but by now they had seated themselves within the shelter which he had left, and he dared not stir hand nor foot. Would the reek of the pipe which he held in his hand betray him ? He lowered it to the wet earth and extinguished it with extreme precaution. The Major had seen some pretty work with the outposts in wooded country overseas before getting into the trouble which had compelled him to exchange and come home : he was versed in night adventure and enjoyed taking his chances.

"Come, this is more to your mind, Tavy; ye would never have found such a hidey-hole by the light of nature. Trust me, I know the winding walks and secret arbours of this and some other inn gardens. Now we can talk. Who was your party to-day? A man and a young miss, my stableman said. Ye may pass the girl, we—I never meddle with a woman. What like was the other?"

But the cleric had turned sulky. "Ye have used me ill, roughly, brutally; I simply don't know ye. Ye were the meekest little squit at Shrewsbury, and up at Oxford never opened your mouth."

"And was kicked accordingly," interposed the other with an accent sharpened by bitter recollections. "But it didn't pay, Tavy; there was one kick too many, and—but I need not trouble ye with my story. There came a day when I turned upon 'em, as even a worm will, they say, but took nothing by my motion."

"They discommoded you? the brutes!"

"They sent me down, man. Aye, in my last year, too, just before I was to have taken my degree. That opened my eyes; I saw that the House was no place for a poor man with scruples. I would sink one defect whilst rectifying the other. There is money in this life, and some fun in it. I had a dozen of old scores to clear, and am working through 'em. You were on my list. These Duddingstones come next; if they fare no worse than yourself, Tavy, they'll have little to make mouths over. Hurt your feelings, have I? Think no more on't: 'twas necessary. If two are to ride one horse one must needs sit in front: I take the saddle, you the crupper, and as that is agreed we can come to business."

"Ye frightened me abominably. I thought I must have died!"

"Ye may yet, Tavy, unless ye attend to me. We cannot be seen in company, but must meet in London. Ye know London?"

The weaker man was already half subdued to the will of his masterful ally. His own plan had made shipwreck; he was only too pleased to be invited to join in another which kept him in some degree in touch with plunder by which he still hoped to benefit. Yet he gave his address grudgingly.

"'Tis a house of call I used when a youngster. A widow, Vince by name, a most respectable person, in Camomile Street, who lets lodgings; ye can find me there or leave a letter."

"I have that in mind," said Repton, after the pause for mental registry of a man accustomed to use his memory rather than tablets. "And now, back to this fellow-traveller of yours."

"A hulking Irishman, as big as the pair of us; a pestilent person, who is by way of paying his addresses to the lady."

"An Irishman? Vastly tall and personable? Not red-haired by any chance, and with a snub nose?"

"You have him, and with his arm in a sling—his right."

"That last fixes him. 'Tis Boyle, late major of the 41st, who was cashiered last week for killing his man in a duel at Chester. Don't say ye have not heard of it. Ye have been keeping out of the way of late though, which is a mistake. Ye should make it your business to know what goes on, as I do. This affair made more noise than common. There were no seconds, ye see, so the survivor stood his trial, but the jury disagreed. 'Twas a stroke of luck for him, but he has had to send in his papers. I take it he is for London to get himself reinstated. He may succeed if he has influence. The man is a brute by all accounts; but such are wanted just now in the colonies."

"He told the lady that he was but just home from the colonies, and had taken his wound there."

"Flam, Tavy: he took his wound where the other man took his death, on the Roodee, at seven o'clock of a Sunday morning. I doubt the fellow's fob is none too well lined, but little fishes are sweet. I take him on to-morrow."

"Are ye mad? Don't think of it. He is as fierce as a bull, and as strong!"

"I was not proposing to wrestle with him," replied Repton, and drummed thoughtfully with his knuckles upon the table in the darkness, whilst the eavesdropper's mouth widened with a ferocious grin, and his eyes sparkled and danced in his head. Shoot? Not if he had both pistols about him, or in the last resort only. 'Twas Indian fighting and a delicate business at that, ambushing an ambush. Half a dozen schemes competed for precedence in his brain: the stolen cameos, the King's blood-money (he put that by), the rogue's ransom as proposed by himself, or his help in carrying off this girl with the parson's aid (a parson seemed a godsend at such a juncture). But there was more to hear—hush! the fellow was speaking again.

"I must have you in it, Tavy."

"Me?—N-not me!—I couldn't. Consider my cloth; besides, I have no arms."

"Y've a pair, which is all I need, and your rôle shall be to play the shrinking, whimpering, clinging poltroon: it fits ye like your skin! Listen, I say. Three miles to the south of this is Sandylane Hill, where the driver and guard will get down to walk, and will bid you men to do the same for the sake of the beasts. Now, ye must contrive that the

Irishman shall fall behind a little, and when that happens be you at his left elbow——”

“I daren’t! I can’t! I won’t!”

“Ye can, and ye will. *Listen, I say!*” with sudden intensity. “At the turn of the road, half way to the top, stands a great holly-bush; so soon as the stage is well forward and you are near, I step out from behind that. The instant ye see me, clutch the man’s left arm with both your hands and fall upon your knees, anchoring him, as one may say. O, squeak, if ye think proper, but under your breath, for I must be speaking. I shall empty your pockets for form’s sake; later we meet as agreed.”

“I tell ye ’tis not in my line. Don’t ask it,” pleaded the weakling.

“Lord, what a pitiful nincompoop it is! but there must be a use for such creatures in the scheme of nature. Hark ye, my man, once more, and for the last time, ye are in for this and shall go through with it or hang.”

The listener felt the darkness tremble with the deep shuddering gasp which followed these words.

“Fail me in any one single particular, Tavy, and ye are a lost soul. The guard of this coach, a friend of mine in a quiet way, a simple, obliging fellow, will have the office, and will stick to ye, and will make ye over to the Staffordshire constables at the county stone.”

“O Christ, what a man!” wailed the miserable cleric. “Ye are playing fast and loose with me. ’Tis but a minute since ye said the men would *not* molest me unless they found——”

“But, they *shall* find enough to convict ye unless ye do as I bid ye. Hold your noise and listen”—he was shaking the man by the shoulder. “I will arrange that the searchers shall have something incriminating to find upon ye. One of those catchpoles is my most particular friend. How else, think you, did I learn about the warrant and where they will execute it? In the news-sheet? As you may see, I am venturing something myself; I act ugly-man to your Irishman; but I must have a forestall, and ye are the only shy covey available. (We must use our tongues to the ritual of this new profession of ours, Tavy.) Come, think of Lancaster Castle! Hearten yourself up with thoughts of a gibbet on Duddingstone Moor, with a cart and a rope and a brother of your cloth to see ye through with it!”

“For pity’s sake, don’t!”

“I found but little pity at your hands in the old days, Tavy. But to our several plans, yours and mine. If there be no comfort in yours (and I don’t see much myself), try mine, for ’tis the only alternative. The boldest course is

ever the safest ; trust to my generalship, and we shall pull the thing off with credit."

" But why, with my—our cameos upon ye, venture such a risk ? "

" The things are not blunt, my boy. I have run foolishly short of spending money. A gentleman in my profession needs retainers, who expect to be paid punctually. I must turn an honest penny at once, for I need a few guineas to reach Oxford, where I have still a score or two to settle.

" And now good-night to ye. Sleep well. Keep time and place in your mind, and play the man for once ! "

A bench creaked, the master-thief was arising to go ; would he take the plain greensward or the more private side of the hedge ? In which case would he not run into the spy in the darkness ? Boyle had saved himself once by a well-timed move, now he showed his mettle by remaining perfectly still, preferring the risk of discovery to the certainty of crossing the plot by premature movements among unseen obstacles. His judgement was justified : the men took the green.

He gave them five minutes' law before following. " This is as intricut a piece of country as iver I rode," mused he, groping for the extinguished pipe ; " I'll be laving no trace of me prisince beyint me." He rearranged sling and bandage before approaching the house. A white object wavered and floated along the hedgeside before him, and a muffled rattling squeal shook the night.

" A howlet, begad ! Now there's some would take that for a token of ill-luck, but I don't hould wid signs. So this is Ned Repton ; the youngster seems little better than a school-boy ; but, my word on't, he is game. Something will have put an edge to him, mebbe."

By a light in the yard and the sounds of a mallet, he divined that the coach-wrights had arrived and would work all night. An early start was to be expected, but the man sate late, amusing himself with his landlady and his nightcap of rum and milk. Later still, in the privacy of his room, the plans floating loosely in his head were brought to a knot. He might have been seen stuffing the right sleeve of his overcoat with underclothing from his bag, dressing himself this way and that, posturing at times before a small cracked looking-glass, whistling softly as he worked ; for the man was in better spirits than he had known for weeks. Things had gone awry with him of late, and from bad to worse. His courage had never failed him, indeed, but his belief in his luck had needed just such a fillip as this twilight escapade supplied. Now the stream of his self-confidence ran strongly again as it had not done since he had seen through the smoke of his pistol

the knees of his latest victim crumple and give way beneath the weight of his falling body, and had realised, a little late, that whatever might pass in America or in Ireland, in England, at least, one gentleman might not shoot another save in the presence of reputable witnesses.

“ ’Twas a bit of a shave, begad, that thryal. I confiss I’d not reckoned upon ut. Me affairs elsewhere have run to a court-martial, or a court of honour; but these Saxon pock-puddings are mighty punctilious, and me nixt must be conductud a little less *hors de règle*. We’ll have seconds and surgeon and all, according to Cocker, and see if that’ll satusfy thim. And, meanwhile, just to fill in time, I’ll be putting mesilf right in the eye of authority by a small curtain-raiser of me own invintion; just Act one, Scene one, enter a dis-thressed damsel, two thieves and a hayro. ’Tis a histrionic jaynious ye are intoirely, Con Boyle, and a tired man. Oh, but she’s the gyurrl for me, this^{er} one! ”

For some minutes he sate musing with empty hands. The child was passing sweet, simple, and gently bred. “ Heighah! ” With an immense yawn he threw himself, dressed as he was, upon his bed, and slept the unembarrassed sleep of a weary schoolboy.

CHAPTER III

MY LANDLADY'S CHAMBER

WHILST these happenings had befallen the men in the dark back-garden of the Griffin, how had it fared with Sue ?

Having made what supper she could, the girl had besought her hostess to show her to her room ; but the woman, her hands full—for the trade of the house grew brisker as the evening drew in—had given her guest in charge of a chambermaid as full-handed as herself, with two extra rooms to make ready at a moment's notice, and little inclined to waste time upon a young miss whose travelling outfit and youth gave small promise of a vail. Hence poor little Sue Travis, turned adrift in a strange house, was feeling somewhat forlorn. When her guide wished her a good-night, bobbed and withdrew, she turned herself about in a flutter of dismay. What she had expected her bed and her room to be like upon this, the first night that she could remember lying from home, she could not have said, but for certain they were not to have been such as these. Each might be good in its way, but the way was not her way ; the room and its plenishing were not hers—that attic and curtained alcove, homely and safe, to which her whole girl-life of nightly undressings and lyings-down had accustomed her. The door filled her with misgivings : she could not fasten it, for her hostess and future bedfellow was still below ; yet some one might come in ; daunting thought ! What, again, if the house should take fire ? Such things did happen. She recalled a catastrophe in Chester, seen from an upper casement, the rolling cloud of illumined smoke, the glare upon the sky, the breakdown of the pumps, the roar of the crowd when the roof-tree fell. Should this befall she were lost, for she knew herself incapable of finding her way to the street by the tortuous stairs and creaking dark corridors by which she had been led to this room.

All things considered, it seemed best to sit, dressed as she was, and to await events. 'Twas chilly, rain whispered

without, a pipe gurgled ; she found her cloak, wrapped it about her, drew up her feet, yawned, and slept.

And whilst she sleeps I must be telling you more of Sue, of Sue as she was at the outset of her adventure, a girl of the simplest, wholly inexperienced in the amazingly new great world upon which she was thrown ; a young swallow not more so, tossed from its warm, cosy nest in the chimney, upon the rollicking winds and widespread landscape dotted with distant spires and encircled by blue horizons and unimaginable distances. So Sue ; but 'twas the hand of death that had broken up the nest that had sheltered her eighteen years of life.

What was she like ? (I have attempted one rude sketch, a mere catalogue of features ; let me essay another, a general effect.) Was she a beauty ?

Yes, Sue was a beauty in the sense that at her coming women used their eyes and took their breaths slowly for a moment, whilst all men's glances followed her going.

And she had arrived so unexpectedly. But a year since there had faced you a big coltish child, angular and loose-jointed, freshly homely, gifted with a shy, lithe ungainliness, white-skinned, maybe, and clear-eyed, and with the sweetest of breaths, but all uncoordinate and incomplete : and now hey ! what subtle essence of womanliness had stolen down, and from whence ? (out of a dim past of multitudinous mother-ancestresses ?) and fulfilled her with the nameless grace that many women miss in part or wholly, and with which some again are too plentifully dowered for their own well-being and the happiness of mankind.

There it was, however, in Sue's case, that marvellous gift, the white magic of charm, and its recipient as cleanly unconscious of its presence as a running stream of its music. She had never seen herself reflected in a lad's eyes, nor found herself unexpectedly and delightfully lovely in her mirror (a shard of scratched and cloudy glass in which in her kittenish moments the child would make amusing grimaces at herself).

And of the three or four whose friendship, or whose acquaintance, rounded off and closed in her maiden life, not one had discovered the miracle that was being worked under his eyes. The lily-bud at its tall, green-gray stalk's end, was unfolding at last, unwelcomed, unwatched by the slowly dying aunt absorbed in the salvation of her soul, or by the vicar, her spiritual doctor, or by her physician, helpless from the first, using palliatives, verbal and other, jealously alive to the extent of his helpless ignorance. Nor had the metamorphosis been noticed by the elderly cook-housekeeper, devoted, overworked,

who divided with Sue the necessary duties of the melancholy household.

Thus hedged about, thus employed, with hands and heart, full of small, daily, tender interests which were her life, the child had filled out to physical maturity, and spiritually to a gentle, unselfish devotion, both rarely beautiful.

Then, at a day's call, as it seemed to the watchers—for the end, how so long foretold, is ever unexpected—the spare, dry, yellow little aunt, the second mother, her eleven months' agony borne with a heroical patience, had arisen and gone forth into the unseen, and the whole scheme of Sue's life, as she understood it, came to an end; its framework snapped: its circumference, the shell that enclosed her, parted, and she was thrust forth upon a strange and wonderful world, for which there had been the slenderest of preparations. This was a final bereavement. Her mother, a paralytic invalid, had died two years before; this was that second shock of earthquake which brings to the ground what its forerunner dislocates; it left Sue homeless. Means she had none; she could never look back to a time when her mother and herself had not been guests. Her aunt's annuity had no more than kept things going towards the end; savings of earlier years had been applied to the demands of recurrent sickness. There was little left. The clothing of the dead woman, and the plenishing of the small house passed to the old servant in fulfilment of promises made years before Sue had crossed the threshold. A packet of family letters, a book or two, a miniature of the dead mother, and twenty pounds, were all that the girl faced the world with when she stepped forth from the house that had sheltered her young life into a winter's morning to seek her fortune; in her case an unknown aunt in London, who, having never taken any interest in her childhood, had at this juncture, in response to the dying appeal of a sister with whom she had quarrelled twenty years earlier, written offering house-room to the niece.

It was a four or five days' journey, which might run to a week, so much depended upon the weather and the roads. The thought of it caught the girl's breath, it also brightened her eyes, for Sue was of an adventurous turn, and inherited a fine courage, albeit she did not know it. Moreover, and again all unwittingly, she carried in her little bosom a talisman—trust. There was something incorrigibly infantine about her, unconsciously inviting. There are such women; one encounters them of all ages—age has nothing to do with it; their great, frank, serious eyes look out upon us from chubby faces overhung by baby curls; they trust us in short frocks and the simplicity of plump dimpled knees, and in longer

skirts are almost as guileless. In middle life, having enjoyed their experiences, they naturally know more, but retain their faith in men. As apple-cheeked, wrinkled old darlings in gray false fronts and glasses, their laugh is as clear and as innocent, their charity still abounds. To three score and ten they go on trusting, wondering, loving, daring, and pardoning. God bless them!

Sue was of this sort, a sort the world can in no wise do without. It is of the small list of essentials. Woman's brain may or may not be necessary to the race, but as to woman's breast there is no room for doubt. She was of the sisterhood of the Holy Innocents: there would be tears in her cup of life; she was to have her adventures. So much was written, and this also, that she was never to want for a friend, for the child was watched over, and her Guardian Angel was strong.

Here, at the end of her first day's travel, she had fallen among—but let me drop my pointer and allow my story to tell itself.

The chamber into which she had been shown was one of three into which the great court-room of the former manor-house had been divided, the closets thus obtained being partitioned off from one another by panelled bulkheads, their knot-holes and crevices inadequately stopped with screws of paper. The cubicles were ill-proportioned, but had secured a window apiece; that wherein the hostess lay was made inconveniently glorious by a huge carved overmantel, supported by blubber-lipped demi-moors plumed and cinctured, unconsciously grotesque as Southsea idols, examples of that Jacobean nadir of taste to which the beautiful fifteenth-century art of our England had descended. In the panel above the hearth a scrolled escutcheon bore the faded achievement of the Chorley blazon, a house attained after the '15 and since extinct.

The woman came wearily up the stair in her stocking-feet, breathing thankfully at every other step for that another day's work was over, unhasped the door, and stepped into the dark room, shading the dip with her hand.

"La! the bed's empty!—wherever? God bless the lamb, she be moidered out."

The girl, still dressed and coiled in her cloak, her little feet drawn up beneath her for warmth, and her hands tucked under her arms, sat sleeping in the soft depths of a set-stitched armchair, a relic of the house's great days. The woman's lips fell apart, her eyes smiled. "Pretty as a pictur'! 'Tis a shame to rouse ye, my pet; but, yes, dearie, ye must get up and out o' your stays, or your poor sides'll be sore to-morrow. Come, I'll onlace ye myself, and let yer hair

down, or these pins and combs 'll be bruising yer little head. There! there! And was it afraid to undress? Ye are safe enow, my dear. See, I'll shoot the bolt and set the big chair to the door, so. We may chat awhile, there's none through the wall; I have put the gentlemen in the other wing: both have taken their candles. I be the last afoot in the house: 'tis my constant rule, and a good one."

The girl sate up, rubbing eyes mazed with her awakening, and submitted herself passively to the compassionate offices of her hostess. At first her little noddle fell drowsily to right and left, but presently, responding to the passage of the brush over her tresses, she turned up a pair of cheeks still rosy with sleep, and wondering gray eyes, to the free-tongued talk of the elder woman.

"And ye came from Chester and are going to London. Fancy! And to think that ye'll be seeing London town! They say 'tis a marvel of a place. And what did ye make of your gentlemen to-day? One was nought, a dummy; but that Irishman—Mr. Tighe, he calls himself—is quite the fine man. What? Ye never noticed? Child, what are yer pretty eyes for?"

"I'm sure he seemed very attentive; he talked a great deal, but I didn't quite understand him, I think. He seemed to want—somehow, Oh, I don't know!"

"Ye 'think'?—ye 'don't know'? Saints alive, what a babe!" muttered the hostess, putting the nightrail over the fair head, and admiringly holding it aloft for a moment before letting it slip down over dimpled shoulders of infantine plumpness and delicacy.

"'Tis a babe, no better. The child have never bin told what she be meant for; no, nor hev found it out for herself. And here she be throwed upon the varsal world naked-like, a gift to the first man who casts his eye upon her . . . My God!"

Susan was sleeping as she sat, but the last word of the soliloquy touched some responsive chord in her bosom.

"Oh, my prayers—I'd forgot!" She slipped down upon her knees beside the bed and fitted her little palms, childlike, to her face. "*Our Father, which art in heaven—*"

Oh, weak defence and piteously futile! Wait; not so held the woman of the world who watched her.

"B' God, and that's well done, too, for neither I nor living soul o' man can save ye. . . . Girl!" The child had arisen, the woman, holding her by the shoulders, was peering keenly and motherly into the half sleepy, half frightened eyes. "Girl, have ye never cared for a lad? 'Yer brother?'—tut, tut, not that way, silly! Has none other kissed ye? 'Yer

poor auntie ? ' Christ, what an innocent ! How is a body to begin ? 'Slife, there's no resistance in her ! She's as open as a rose, and as tempting. Girl ! girl ! ye must marry—*marry* ! 'tis written between yer very eyes. D'ye believe in signs ? Ye do ? Then I'll cut the pack for ye—nay, the Book, since ye are plainly one of the Good God's little ones. Here ! " She mounted a stool, and with a grunt, reached down from its shelf a stout, dusty Bible, crossed herself, bowed to the four corners of the room, " Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, bless the varse as I turn on ! " and pricked for a text between the leaves with a cap-pin from her own head. " There ye be, my dearie, read, for I be no scholard in small print."

Sue hung low over the book on the goodwife's lap, and, holding the dip near, read from the pin's point forward, these words, "*. . . man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee.*"

" Did y'ever ? " gasped the hostess in delighted wonder. "'Tis a true sign—a sending. Girl, there's nothing for such as ye be but a man, a master. God send ye a kind one ! "

" But—but, I don't think I want to. Poor auntie never did. Why should I ? and who ? and what for ? " faltered Sue.

" Oh ye little, little fool ! " laughed the woman, now half unclad, enfolding and kissing her bedfellow. " Why ? (how can a body say it to such a child ?) Because, my lamb, God made ye for it, and so ye must. 'Tis not in nature for such a piece as you to make a nun. No, b' God ! So, since London town, that ye say y're bound for, is against ye (a very trap for maids !) and every man ye meet'll be against ye, and the very Book Itself be against ye, there's nought for it but to do as yer mother did, and choose whilst choose ye may. Aye, when the first strapping gentleman cries 'Snip !' do ye cry 'Snap !' and hold him to ring, book, and priest.

" But pray yer hardest for a fine man, a tall, strong, personable gentleman ; he'll beat ye a bit, no doubt, when in drink—they all do, and they've the law for it. But the big men are soft 'uns and easy to manage. But beware of a little man (bless ye, I've tried—twice a widow I be, and here ye have me) ! No, no, my lamb, be advised. Hop-o-my-thumbs are jealous and main spiteful, ay, and bad to abide. Marry a big upstanding man, say I, ay, though he have a red face on him——"

" Oh, oh, please no more ! " sobbed the girl, with scared, wet eyes shining in the flicker of the dip, " Marry ? Why ? What should I want with ?——What do I *do* ? "

"Save us and keep us!" breathed the woman, her great knee on the bed's edge. "Did yer mother never——?"

"How could she? She had a stroke when I was little, and poor auntie was single and never spoke of such things, nor let a man pass the door save the sweep and the vicar. She never told me, and I don't want to know; please, I *won't* know!"

"God pity thee!" muttered the woman, and blew out the light.

CHAPTER IV

SANDYLANE HILL

THE coach lurched and splashed through a whiteness of morning fog. The three passengers, well wrapped against the chill, held by the window-straps, minimising inevitable collisions. The glum young man bore his joltings in silence, his vis-à-vis, the lady, thought him ill, so wan a face was he wearing beneath the pulled-down peak of his montier. The Major might be suffering more, but made no complaint, albeit the lady, do what she would, was repeatedly thrown against the arm which he carried in a sling. For these misadventures she proffered brief but feeling excuses, which after a momentary sucking-in of the lips, or a tightening of the eyelids, the sufferer accepted with a good-humoured laugh.

"Gad, my dear madam, 'tis no fault of yours that we are shaken like pease in a bladder; and me arr'm, which another time would be very much at your servus, is obliged to ye for your kindnuss. It might asily have chanced upon a harder coach-mate than your soft little silf. If 'tis foive days' close confinement in wan another's company that we're committed for, 'tis thanking the saints I'll be, and wishing I may niver fall into worse company."

The lady would acknowledge such advances with a slight inclination and turn her veiled face again to the window.

They had started betimes again, and had the road to themselves; the world seemed yet abed and the ways empty of passengers, as was to be expected in a day when, save on business of life and death, few travelled by night. And for reasons; the condition of the tracks for one; the king's highways were worse kept then than a parish by-road is to-day. Whilst Susan and her companions in misery were being swung and bumped from rut to puddle, Macadam,

a youngster of one-and-twenty, was thinking out in his American home the principles upon which a road should be built, principles hidden from Britons since the legions left us. Moreover, save upon certain well-patrolled turnpikes, and such were few, there were the Gentlemen of the Road to reckon with. "The Right Villanous John Hall, that Famous and Notorious Robber" (I quote from a contemporary tract), had gone to his account some years before our story begins, and his successor, one Denis Neale, the so-called Second Turpin, and many another of the breed, had galloped and bullied and swung in chains in turn; but an unapostolical succession of rascals had arisen to wear vizard and halter, the darlings and heroes of every chamber-wench and stable-lad down the road.

How else? What would they have, those economists of the school of Walpole? "Stop the war!" they had cried. "Disband the cavalry!" 'Twas done, and some thousands of the best horsemen and boldest spirits in Europe found themselves thrown upon the world to starve. Can ye wonder that they preferred to steal?

There were many at it, and had been since the fall of Marlborough. It speaks well for our national character and tacit respect for a law which we may feel ourselves compelled to break, that these knights-errant fought each for his own hand, instead of forming such bands as terrorised southern France. Who now recalls that Bonaparte at the summit of his power, while giving the law to kings, could only travel from Marseilles to Genoa under a strong military escort? With King George 'twas never so desperate a case. Yet highway robbery, considered as a profession, had much to be said for it during the hundred and sixty years between the Restoration and the Regency, and might not unreasonably be held to offer to a disbanded light dragoon or broken second horseman more prizes and fewer blanks than he could have found in either a civil or military career. He led the life he loved—the jolliest life in the world whilst it lasted—and when his time came (and his time comes to each of us), it was bullet or rope at the best, and, at the worst, the plantations, or, in war-time, re-enlistment for the Indies, or a waister's berth in a King's ship, alternatives scarce worse than were faced by the Jack or the linesman of a brutal day wherein poor fellows were flogged round the fleet, or cut to ribands at the triangles before being discharged to beg on crutches.

The life of the road called many a desperate fellow, who was sure of friends everywhere, and might find one even in the jury-box; failing of whom, would he not kiss his hand

to the ladies in the gallery, pass his nosegay to his lawyer, bow to the judge and—live in a moving ballad ?

“ Six roving lads to carry me,
Gi’ they long life and liberty ;
Six blooming maids to carry my pall,
Gi’ they true loves and blue ribands all.”

(But, about your coach, sir, and Miss Susan ? Verify, reader, all in good time, let me get into my stride !)

Creaking, jolting, bumping, they went until, at the foot of the ascent, the smoking cattle were brought to a stand and let get their winds for their coming effort. The guard flung the door open, and, whilst bidding the gentlemen to alight, gallantly permitted the lady to keep her seat. But this the girl refused to think of : her limbs were already calling for exercise. “ May I not walk beside ye, Mr. Guard ? ” She was down before he could lower the step.

The coachman had made his reins fast to the whip-socket and took the head of his near leader. “ Gee,” cried he. His team spread quarters and went up into their collars with a will : the lightened coach was around the first bend and lost in the fog before the pedestrians had unstiffened knees cramped by sitting.

“ Shall ha’ no call for to borry a plough-team to get her oop Sandylane Hill to-day, madam,” said the guard, and carrying his weapon in the crook of his elbow, strode beside the lady, regarding her with fatherly approval. She had raised her veil when the men fell behind, and now, loosening her bonnet-strings, lifted the poke from her beautiful young head, and bore it dangling from her wrist as she tripped beside her companion.

The men were mounting more slowly, the Major going heavily with grumblings as to his bandaged arm ; the glum young man, wanner than ever, keeping close beside his companion for reasons that we wot of.

“ Stap me vitals ! But I’ve the Virginia chills upon me ! ” growled the soldier. “ D’ye know what that means ? Thought I’d shaken thim off, but no such luck ! And me wound has opened again with the bumping of this infernal stage. I’ll thank ye to lind me the suppor’t of yer ar’rm, me dear sir.” Whilst speaking he had passed a massive left hand through the elbow timidly offered. Baskett felt with an inward qualm the weight and power of it ; his stomach heaved at the thought of what was at hand ; sweat broke beneath his wig.

Thus climbing, with frequent pauses for breath, for the

Major seemed in poor condition, the two approached a dense holly-bush which screened a winding of the ascent; they reached it, were abreast of it; the glum young man caught his breath with an inward cry, and gripped the brawny wrist with both his damp, white hands, for a masked man had stepped from the thicket, and was covering the Major with a pistol at point-blank range.

"Your purse, sir, if you please!"

"Me purse? And what nixt?" blurted the Irishman. "Futpads, be all that's hooly! If 'tis money ye're afther, 'tis a small matther ye'll be gettin' from me; just a crippled sowldier's savings an' the curse of Cromwell along wid thim! Hooly Saint Biddy! If 'twas a sound man I was this day—but, wid wan ar'rm in splints and the other in chancery——" he swore hoarsely.

"Which pocket, sir? and no nonsense, I beg."

"Har'rk to him, he *begs*. Sure, 'tis the Jaynius of politeness! But '*nonsinse*,' is ut? Left, thin; me lift fob, of course. Where ilse? But if this small man were not grippin' me wrist like a fox-thrap, stap me liver, but I'd have taken the two of yez on wid me nakud fist, pistol or none."

He blustered volubly, but seemed to quail when the cold muzzle was pressed to his forehead, and, letting pent breath, threw forward his left hip, its fob opportunely unbuttoned.

The vizarded robber, still keeping muzzle to flesh, glanced irresolutely at his confederate, who, with staring eyes and upper lip drawn to the gum, was breathing painfully, all emotions congested in one—fear; and all senses in abeyance save the ear, astrain for coming wheels. Such a poltroon might be trusted to cling to what he was holding, but bid him relax his grip and he was all as likely to bolt as to pick the pocket. "The Scholar" must take this purse himself.

Shifting his weapon to his left hand, he drove his right into the open fob, and in the act of bending, tumbled sidelong, for a spurt of pale flame burst from beneath the bandaged arm of his prisoner.

"*Oh-h-h-h!*" gasped the ex-chaplain, clapping hands to ears and sitting down in the dirt.

"Nate shot, begad!" remarked the Major, stepping back from, and peering under, the smoke of his pistol, ere taking possession of the one which his aggressor had let fall. He covered him for a couple of breaths, but the man's half-open eyes were fixed, nor was there any movement of the relaxed limbs. Blood began to ooze from the back of the fallen head.

"Dead as Herod!" was the victor's comment. "And look ye there, now; 'tis me purse he has in his hand, thief

of the wor'ld that he is ! A-well, my friend, exchange is no robbery ; permit me."

Still holding the captured weapon ready for instant use, he bent over the fallen man, whom he relieved of a second pistol, a watch, and seals ("preshumably stolen") and a shamoy belt, which last he hastily bestowed in his own boot. He worked with the silent despatch of a man who expects interruption, and only when his transferences were completed, spared a glance at the lachrymose creature beside him.

"Liss noise, little man ; attind now !" He shook him by the shoulder. "You are aware that I've yer dirthy neck in my breeches pockut ? As ut happens, I've another use for ut, in fact, I give ut back to yez—ye may put ut in yer own—on conditions, mind, on conditions. Ye will now come up to London wid me—yes, as if nothing had happened." The face of the cowering wretch unpuckered, expressing a half incredulous relief. "Oh, I mean ut. 'Will I be giving ye up ?' I will not ; that is if yez do as I tell ye. Ye were a sort of orderly to this dead tory here, and it has lid ye to this. Be mine, me son, and ye'll not regret ut."

"Do—do ye mean to say—— ?"

"That I ixtend to ye the royal pardon ? I do that. But see this, now ; I release ye on yer parowle, which is to serve me until I've done wid ye ; and whin I speak of servus I mean military *obejunce*, hand, fut, and eyelid, and no argymunts. Ye may have observed that I'm apt to be a thrifle abrupt whin crossed. Is ut a bargain ?"

Never was service more promptly exchanged.

"Yes, yes ! O, I thank and bless you ! I will pray for ye until the last day of my life."

"I may need ut. But yer first jutty shall be to put up a bit of a prayer for yer frind here, who was a bould bhoy if iver I saw wan."

"Prayer for the dead ! Sir, 'tis contrary to the Articles ! I am a Protestant—Church of England as by law established."

"Mutiny, begad ! Does the sniveller dispute me first command ? Har'rk ye, now, small man. Yer ordhers are widout doubt heretical and invalud, but they'll be betther than none. I'm tould that ye're a kind of a sort of a priest, so down upon yer marrow-bones and to yer offus. Short work ye must make of ut, for the coach 'll be waitin' ; but the poor bhoy here shall not slip through yer fingers into hell-fire if ye can anyways smuggle him into purgatory. Begin now !"

CHAPTER V

MORE OF SANDYLANE HILL

MAJOR JUSTIN rode gently, for the day was young, and a wise man allows the horse which is to carry him until nightfall to begin at a foot-pace. The six months which had passed over him since he had sailed from Madras upon special service had treated him lightly. The voyage, with its head winds from Point de Galle to the Comoros, its brush with a French pirate in the Mozambique Channel, and subsequent refitting at the Cape, was over at last. His interviews with the Court of Governors had been something better than satisfactory; he had left the service with handsome compliments and a well-earned grant, the amount of which had somewhat staggered its recipient, who, alone of those present when it was tendered and accepted, had not understood that it was intended to seal the lips of a man who knew a great deal too much, but whose silence was not to be formally bought. There had been speculation among exalted personages as to his reasons for leaving their service, surprise at his reputed poverty, and regrets at parting with a servant whose capacity they had recognised somewhat late.

Other interviews had followed. A man of his quality, fresh from the seat of war, was worth the notice of King George's ministers. Justin had waited in anterooms and sate in the presence of Great Names, whom he found upon near acquaintance to be gouty, fidgety persons, who swore more abominably in their conversation than the ship's officers had done in dirty weather, whose selfishness exceeded anything which he had met with in the course of his military life, and whose ignorance of Eastern affairs bewildered him. Where was he to begin with gentlemen who could not carry in their heads from one interview to the next the relative positions of Madras and Bombay, whose attentions were constantly diverted by immaterial trifles, and whose senses were obscured by overnight excess?

That our friend had favourably impressed these demigods

may be inferred from their offers of patronage. Inducements had been held out to him to enter the Royal service, and Justin, as a wise man, had gravely and courteously temporised. He had considered, and was still considering, these proffers. It was hoped at the War Office that so soon as his private affairs permitted, he would accept a majority in one of the new regiments being raised for service in America. Had he stipulated for a colonelcy he would have got it.

He had had singular experiences. Very much to his amazement, Society discovered him. The Town, badly in want of a sensation, was disposed to throw itself at the feet of this latest wonder from the Indies, a nabob with clean hands. Our friend had all his work to do to keep himself from being the rage. Great ladies would have pushed his fortunes, handkerchiefs were thrown, and soft glances greeted him from behind fans; but this man kept his head, smiling non-committally and—wonder of wonders—made no enemies. Of the crowd who had pressed for introductions one face remained in his memory, the visage of a plain-featured man with an ear-trumpet, broad, snuffy upper lip, and a pair of remarkable eyes, a painter of portraits, it seemed, for he intimated his willingness to paint the Major's, an honour which our friend bashfully declined, nor knew that half the Town would have leapt at the offer, nor that in refusing it he had forfeited immortality: for the artist was Reynolds.

His future thus dawning rosily before him, Justin could apply himself to the business which lay next to his heart, the finding and assisting the children of the only woman whom he had ever loved, and the only man whom he had ever hated.

The charges of those pistols were in process of realisation. His man of business advised him that such stones were not to be hastily thrown upon the market; give him time, and he would do justice to the commission: a couple of pretty fortunes had lain hidden in those long gray barrels.

But how to find the beneficiaries? The discovery of missing friends is simplified to-day by advertisement, photography, the private inquiry agency, and the assistance of the police, of which institutions three were unborn in Justin's time and the fourth in its infancy.

Our friend did what was possible; some thirty country editors kept his need before their subscribers. Sandwiched between rewards for the apprehension of defaulting stewards, descriptions of lost property, and milliners' announcements of the arrival of fashion-dolls from Paris (in war-time, ye ladies, smuggled at risk of brave men's necks); yes, and alternating with challenges to prize fights and notices of the sales of black boys "by the candle," might have been seen our friend's

offer of fifty guineas for information as to the present addresses of Sigismund Draycott Travis and Susan Agatha Travis, children of Colonel Travis of the Honourable East India Company's service and Agatha his wife, the latter deceased, but last known as residing at Woodbine Cottage, Peckham Road, Camberwell.

The case was far from hopeless, for the middle class, the only one with which he needed to concern himself, was but a fraction of what it is to-day, and the number of returned East Indians quite insignificant, and the more likely to be remarked by their neighbours. He would prosecute his search in person, and in neighbourhoods likely to be affected by the genteel poor.

Highgate and Clapham, Paddington and Kennington had failed him, and Bath and Tunbridge Wells. No suspicions of seaside residence disturbed him. Brighton Steyne (then Brighthelmstone) was still a place for the spreading of nets, and every doctor would have warned his patient against inhaling "the noxious fumes of the ocean." A hint from a landlady in Streatham had sent the Major eastward to a poorer lodging in Camberwell, and from this—directed by a barber-surgeon, in whose memory lingered some indistinct recollection of letting blood from a sick child and its mother's anxieties during flitting—he was working a cold scent toward Chester. It was not his first long ride on this business, but he rode hopefully, silently, convinced that "Providence" would bless his quest. There have been such men in the past; their successors are with us still: politely pertinacious, doggedly cheerful fellows, upheld by inner springs of certitude, who go smiling upon some self-imposed duty until they succeed, or haply die smiling, nobly optimistic, ungrumbling—the salt of the earth, which were otherwise less sanitary than we find it.

He would have scouted the idea of hardship. Was he not a free man for the first time in his life, with leisure to attend to his own affairs, and with means to see his native land? The air of the winter roads, raw or keen, smacked well to him; rains smote him over the shoulder like privileged old friends; mop-headed staglers, topping roadside quicks, nodded in turn to him respectful but confidential recognitions; branching oaks stretched low-hung arms towards him in silent greeting; thrushes sang "*Home a-gain!—Home a-gain!—We know you! We know you!*" And he, well fed, well-cloaked, with a stout cob between his knees and with all his limbs—he, who had come through so many affairs, reverently thanked "Providence" and rode with a good heart.

Providence. Some of you will be asking how this man's inner life was fed and sustained at its level of restraint and impulse. Men, for the most part, are not good or bad because they are

born so, but build themselves upon some spiritual pattern of their acceptance ; falling below it, no doubt, but conforming in the main, and even in failure showing the influence of their creed.

Justin was well-nigh creedless. His life had been cast from boyhood among unsympathetic surroundings and strong temptations, but the poverty of a poor gentleman volunteer had proven a stern friend to him, and had kept his youth from riot and mischief. In the seclusion and loneliness necessitated by rigid economy he had been thrown upon simpler and purer sources of human companionship ; had seen the finer side of the native ; had shown, and been shown in turn, disinterested kindnesses, and had built himself nobly and unconsciously.

Thus of character he had much, if of dogmatic religion little. The Anglo-Indian society of his day, demoralised by rapid fluctuations of fortune, hard of heart and fierce in its pursuit of the new wealth, was ostentatiously irreligious. It was observed, and resented, that the returned nabob, whether in pursuit of his pleasures, or in playing the game of politics, stuck at little ; those who had watched him making his money averred that in India he had stuck at nothing. Surrounded and commanded by such as these, young Justin had tacitly erected for himself sanctions of his own ; *Christianus naturaliter*, for him, still there were things which no gentleman could do ; and within these rigid outer defences had grown up and bloomed a minutely cultivated garden of the heart known to few of his colour, but of which his servants and domestic animals were free.

This mare had the key of it, this roadster, his latest acquisition, she who had flinched at the first casual contraction of his heels, and had broken when he had sorted the reins, after the second day's handling was at her ease beneath him, and now, well pleased with herself and her master, butted confidently on through the morning thickness filling a stealthy, silent winter road which she had never travelled before, secure in his piloting.

Nature practised old, nigh-forgotten tricks upon him. Like half-remembered acquaintance, unsure of their welcomes, the country sounds and scents, and country silence, drew shyly up to the horseman, nodded and passed. Now the faint, far-away scritch of a jay, muffled by distance and intervening boskage, reminded him of his lost boyhood ; and now the hot, rank vermin-taint tickled his nostril, telling that, just where the mare's feet were set, a dog-fox had crossed not a minute since. Justin inhaled, bending low over his holster, padded the hen-thief in the sandy loam thrown up at the edge of a rut, and rode

on smiling as only he can smile whose inmost heart is at peace with itself and with his brother man.

On this, as on other lonely ridings, Justin was wont to be painting for himself imaginary portraits of the two young folk he was seeking. "So, should she stand, just as high as that lass beside the lych-gate, but no taller; her mother was not tall. As for her hair: it should be dark, though they tell me a woman with dark hair, such hair as Agatha's, often starts with a flaxen poll in childhood and darkens slowly later. She shall not be a tow-headed Saxon, though, I cannot think it; nor lumpish, nor thick in the ankle, as this that is coming with the pails and yoke. . . . As for my boy, he must be twenty by now, a tall fellow, a man grown, and just in need of a father to start him in life. . . . Hope I be come in time to keep the young rascal out of mischief. Eh, but how will such a spark take it from me, a stranger?"

This for a sample musing. On the day of our choosing, a day of deep wet ways and veiled woodlands, he rode with a bosom full of cheerful anticipations, and so undisturbed, the roads being empty of footfolk, that he had neither met nor overtaken a soul since the last hamlet. Then, just where the woods closed in upon a hollow way, and the ground began to fall, and mist lay blank and thick, he must needs come full upon four steaming coach-horses at a stand, their winter coats dripping with sweat, necks at stretch, and rounded nostrils pink with recent exertion. Their driver was at the head of the near leader, rubbing the creature's ears—a rat-tailed hero with trembling knees who had done his share of the work and more—rating meanwhile the off-leader, a roman-nosed, lop-eared slug, with sly, half-shut eye and fat sides wealed with the thong. Justin, who knew a horse, took it all in at a glance.

The stage behind stood empty, door open and step down, and beside it the guard and a young woman in warm gray travelling-cloak caught up in one hand from shoes soiled by the way. As the rider emerged from the fog, this bonny creature turned up to him a serious, simple, sweet-and-twenty face, or it might have been a couple of years younger, its cheeks bright with such textures and carmines as take the very breath of a man newly come from the tropics. Lord, how those great gray eyes shone upon the horseman from under a loosened wisp of mutinous hair! a tress which her fingers were at work upon as she stood, her bonnet looped from her elbow by its strings.

His face must have expressed the pleasure that he felt; but there was never woman yet that had flushed painfully beneath Justin's eye. The child met it frankly; the life of the road was still new and wonderful to this hitherto cloistered creature: a new world of men, strong, strange, shaven, top-booted persons,

with resonant voices, big hands, and queer ways, some taking, some repellent, all interesting.

"God bless your sweet face, my maid!" was Justin's unspoken prayer whilst courteously uncovering; for the guard, who was in act of {setting horn to lip, lowered it and stayed him with uplifted hand.

"'Mornin' t'ye, sir; ye'll be meetin' two o' my fares below, a tall gentleman and a smaller: might I be so bold as to arst ye to bid 'em to hurry up for my time's take?"

Justin would do so with pleasure. He covered himself and bade them good-day. The fog thickened between them as he passed on, muting the guard's gruff and the lady's sweeter response. His mare's withers sunk and sunk as each shortening step committed her to the unseen descent. By the quick patter of multitudinous falling drops, he knew that he must be in the heart of a woodland; the solitude of a fog enwrapped him—a lonely, unsatisfactory, half silence, filled with small, distracting sounds, and broken presently and abruptly by the crack of a whip down below.

That young face of innocent wonder went with him. "A sweet girl to look upon, surely a good girl," he mused. "Will my girl, when I find her, be such another? They will be much of an age, I should say." And therewith he fell to thinking of how little he knew of young women of any colour, and least of all of the young women of his own race.

Cautiously went the mare, keeping her quarters well under her, butting with lowered head into the smother, winding as the road wound, setting down foot after foot firmly into deep, damp sand; her good brown eyes upon the track ahead of her, but her nostrils wide and her ears cocked forward, for there was a tang in the wet air that puzzled, a rank, smoky smatch which she could not explain to herself. Her rider detected her anxiety and watched her ears. Pit-a-pat fell the drops, deadening smaller sounds. Then, close at hand, began a sing-song recitative interrupted by sniffs, and rounding a black holly-bush which held the fog like a sponge and dripped from every glossy leaf, the mare checked suddenly with a strong shudder. Justin's hand went out to his holster, but was as promptly withdrawn. In the midst of the way, not ten yards below him, lay a man bareheaded, save for a black vizard, a touch that told all; the rogue, whoever he might be, and however he had come there, had fallen to some sudden and mortal stroke without struggle, nor had so much as raised a hand. A hat lay near. Instantly Justin was aware that beyond the body knelt a man with bare white face drawn with fear, gabbling prayers with lips which seemed scarcely under control, whilst behind him, less distinct, through moving threads of vapour,

with hand upon his shoulder, keeping him down, stood a bigger man. Both were uncovered. This last seemed a person of resource. "Sir—who the devil——?" he rapped. "Put up your hands, or——" he dived for a weapon in some inner pocket.

"Needless, sir," replied Justin, uncovering, "but under the circumstances excusable. I can see how it stands."

"Ye may that, honust man," cried the other heartily. "Yer pardon's begged; I was a thought hasty; for indade ye made me jump. The blayguard here——"

"Stopped you?"

"He did. And I him. He has ate an half-ounce of me lead, a full male, seemin'ly, for I got him behint the ear (I niver permit mesilf to miss): ay, not a minute since. I'm wondering ye did not hear my shot."

The speaker, a robust and soldierly figure, dominantly tall, took the matter too coolly for Justin's taste. Even in Ireland (the man's tongue bewrayed him) one might be excused for showing concern at having blown the brains out of a fellow creature. None was shown here; the prayer had ceased abruptly upon the new comer's appearance, and the significance of the bared heads escaped him. Our friend found the man's personality antipathetic at his first glance; there was more than a touch of the victorious gladiator in his pose, a wounded gladiator too, by his bandaged arm.

"A *ruse de guerre*, me dear sir," laughed the Irishman, replying to Justin's unspoken inquiry. "'Tis just a dummy, an improvised ambushcade, a casual invintion, a little thing of me own. I fired from beneath ut, just as the rogue was for handling me. Indade, the dirty fist of him was in me fob as I pulled." He tossed the stuffed sleeve as he spoke, displaying the pistol-hand it had concealed.

"Who is he?" asked Justin, peering down upon the corpse. None replied. The smaller man had arisen and was beating the sand from his knees, breathing the while in short gasps, a creature unnerved. The guard's horn came dully from above.

"They are sounding the recall; we must be rejoining the main command, me frind," said the Irishman, who, having pouched the spoils, was in haste to be gone; turning to the rueful figure beside him, he plucked him by the sleeve with a "H-now, sor!"

"But, the body—will ye leave it—so?" asked Justin.

"Faith, me dear sor, I will that. I have not a coff'n about me. Me friend here has done the needful." The man had stirred a foot, but something in the horseman's eye detained him. After a momentary survey of the hand and seat, he resumed with hauteur: "I have not the honour of knowing

yer servuss, but, unless I am mightily desaved in ye, we have both of us seen prettier and honuster bhoys than this dead raparee here, left where the bullets found thim. . . . A-there, now, am I not right? . . . Sure, I have put in me morning's wor'rk, and the townland to which I have done the good-turn this day may find cart and shovel for him. I was niver in command of a burying party, and do not propose——" He turned roughly upon his companion. "Come, Mister Sniveller, 'tis me tur'rn to offer yez an ar'rm. Stip out! A good-day to ye, sor!" Tucking the cringing creature beneath his elbow, the bully strode up the hill.

Justin turned in his saddle and watched him go with a narrowing eye. He could admire resource in self-defence, and the tense-drawn nerve which can face a loaded barrel without giving; but this went beyond him. Even in the East they did not pistol a dacoit and ride on with a laugh; 'twas butcherly.

Meanwhile, though the fog had engulfed the pair, he could hear the Irishman, whose voice had a resonant quality which carried, addressing, or perhaps rating his companion.

"Hould up, small thief that ye are, and don't be draggin' yer feet. And a wor'rd in yer ear, me frind, before we rejoin the leedy. Ye will be pleased to ride beside the coachman for the rist of this journey. D'ye ondersthand?"

The relations of this pair seemed unconventional; but Justin had other things to think of; the corpse in the rut cried mutely for pity. The poor rascal had staked his life upon the venture, and had lost it to one who chanced to be his master in address. There lay the limp, huddled figure, supine in highway dirt, the vizard awry over the upper face.

He had looked too long for his mare. She suddenly broke away sidelong with a snort of fear, boring upon the bit. Why, indeed, should he interrupt his journey? What claim had this carrion upon him? "The business is none of yours," whispered that lower nature, neither brute nor man, which dwells with each of us. "You are bound, as it is, upon an errand of charity, to which you stand committed in honour; you delay at risk to others as well as to yourself. A meddler stands to lose. Yonder Thing had friends while living who will not be far away, and who, coming, may misconstrue your presence, may decline to accept your explanation. What would a coroner's jury of yokels make of your story? Your loitering here courts misconception and can render no service to the dead."

Lending an ear to the tempter, whilst half-heartedly curbing his mare, Justin had been carried twenty yards down hill, and missed but little of pursuing his journey with some loss of

self-esteem—the price which we pay for liberty to fall below ourselves. But the habit of a life stepped in, was not to be broken by a nervous horse and a conscience in temporary abeyance.

“’Fore George,” he muttered, “except upon a forced march I could never leave a dead native to be crushed by the wheel of the next *bandi*. Stand, mare!” He retraced his steps, swung down, hitched his rein to a hazel, bent over the corpse, shifted the vizard, and curiously scrutinised the livid mouth and half-opened eyes. “Not a bad face . . . it might have been a good face. ’Tis the face of a gentleman, and assuredly a young face. Poor lad, what brought ye to it?”

Whilst meditating, he observed that the wound behind the ear still oozed. Stripping a glove, he inserted a finger: the skull was intact, the ball had glanced. In a moment his interest, tepid hitherto, warmed. “Stunned, possibly; hardly dead. What?” for the dim eyes opened fully, the lips moved, the corpse was reviving upon his hands.

Our friend had not followed the wars for half his life without picking up some anatomy. He knew, for example, that a ricochet off one of the basal prominences is of no great moment unless a chief artery be cut. None had been cut here; the fellow was alive, and must be moved.

But by whom? Having bound the wound up, Justin arose and stood, considering possibilities. Twenty years earlier he had lifted from the ground the inert body of a brother-in-arms (Travis, no less), shouldered and borne it beyond the spatter of matchlock balls; but such a feat is not easy of performance. It is only in fiction that the hero snatches, or catches, the unconscious victim from the earth and bears him gallantly, yet tenderly, to safety (anything under ten miles). *Fiat experimentum in corpore amici*. Get some one of your size to lie flat and passive upon the carpet and do your best to get him upon the table, and you shall see. The Major, if sinewy, was slight, and no longer in his first youth. This wounded rascal was the taller and heavier man, and could be depended upon to give no assistance, no, not by the crooking of a finger; he would be mere slack, dead weight.

“What to do next?” asked Justin, and glanced anxiously about him, and then smiled, for help was at hand. A loutish country boy was peering through the hazels upon the bank above him, a grower in either hand, with a broad, half-scared, wholly worried grin upon his round, freckled face.

“My lad——”

“Oye, Mister; comin’,” rejoined the other, and let himself down into the road with clumsy agility, scratched his head, straddled, and spat upon his hands. ’Twas an Englishman

in the making, and meant work. Justin knew the stock, and brightened, awaiting the slow-coming counsel of the native.

"Us had best brung he along to mother's," said the boy at length. "'Taint fur," he added encouragingly; and, buttoning up a loose mouth, took the fallen man by the shoulders, a post Justin had proposed for himself.

Twice in the course of the following ten minutes the boy, wooden-faced as ever, paused for breath or to improve his hold, but once only did he unbutton his lips.

"Mother's bin and got salvation," said he; "'tis all along o' they Methodies. Pray Gawd it hain't spyled her; she were a good 'un afore."

CHAPTER VI

MOTHER LEA'S COTTAGE AND GOOD RESOLUTIONS

THE winter sunrise made Royal Ruby of the small diamond panes in the tiny lattice ; a splash of colour fell across the face of the patient. He frowned in sleep and sneezed faintly, opening his eyes thereafter and blinking with that large incertitude which is conceded to a soul which has been for some days upon furlough. Who was he ? Where was he ? Upon his right a little cone of dust was spinning in the up-draught to the chimney ; the back-log glowed dully through its coat of ash, which still retained the shape of last night's billet. He was himself, right enough, and this was the old life again (he had had his dreams—drear dreams, and had awaited a worse awakening). But where was he ? These web-draped ceiling beams recalled something—seemed half-familiar. The mantleshef drew his eye, a crock, a grey-beard, its broken mouth stopped with a screw of paper, filled him with comfort: he not only knew himself, but his whereabouts, and heard within an aching head the broken pieces of his consciousness getting into contact and rearranging their contiguities, not without twinges.

It was all right, then, so far. That crock gave reassurance. He might relax the brain tension. The last impulse given to nerves warning them of the need for flight or fight, eased off. He felt the bed beneath him was his own for another hour, and dozed.

Later he aroused again. Was it ten minutes after, or upon another day ? He knew not, but the sense of comfort remained. But curiosity was now awake: these arms of his, what hampered them ? Fetters ? No, *bandages*. They had let him blood, then ; but what had happened ? He recalled nothing, neither scuffling nor sickness. This was the house of friends, a familiar house, though its name still eluded him ; but the crock was still there.

A slight movement beside him drew a slow-rolling eye. A

man, an elderly man, a stranger, sat in the oaken settle, where, by the look of things, he had sate all night, for he was unshaven and weary-eyed: a grim, elderly fellow, thought Repton. (Oh, he was sure of himself by this time, and was "Repton" right enough, as well as several other names and nicknames. He had discarded them all, had had his doubts of himself, and had sailed dark seas under strange colours during that furlough.) Yes, a plain, elderly person, but with something of the gentleman about him too; though what a gentleman, save a Gentleman of the Road, should be doing at Mother Lea's, was beyond him. That particular thread of wonder snapped, another tingled weakly. "Tod!" he muttered, and was extraordinarily surprised at the sound of his own voice.

The stranger turned alertly, but silently, and took in the position. "The boy is all right, sir; he brought you here. Yes, and the horse is seen to; so, off to sleep again!"

"I thank you," murmured the patient, and slept, but had given the half of himself away with those three words.

"A man of condition," ruminated Justin. "Come, there's the more to be made of him."

At his next arousing the sick man was clear in his wits, and had made a long march towards convalescence. His nurse, who in the meantime had washed and shaved himself, made shift to do as much for his patient, who, thus obliged, grew three years younger at a jump, as your dark man does upon emerging from the lather. There is no half-way house for our self-respect; 'tis either beard or clean scrape for us. The amateur barber surveyed his work with pardonable pride. His trove was improving under his hands; no prodigal this with the scents of the swine about him; no sallow, pimpled jail-escape, but a taking youngster, a pretty fellow, with well-formed, unspoilt features, broad, low forehead faintly depressed above the springing of the nose as if by recent trouble, but with that peculiar supra-orbital development which the Greeks gave to their statues of Hermes—a straight, fine nose, with the flexible nostrils of the artist, each with its well-turned wing, and the small firm mouth that men admire and women love, with an inheritance of race upon its short upper lip. The face ended well below; the rounded chin came forward boldly, but not aggressively; the jaw was square, but just failed of pugnacity; 'twas the face for a friend; you would have trusted that boy at sight. Justin did, despite his story, known and unknown.

"I've dropped into the middle of a sad tale, I doubt," thought he, surveying his work as he wiped his razor. "There were mistakes on both sides went to the ravelling of such a

skein as this. Is it just possible that I am sent to unravel it? 'Fore God, I'll stick to the lad and do what a man may to set him on his feet again. What else was John Company's big grant made to me for, eh? Say that I should be getting forward with my own affairs; 'tis but a brace of needles in a bottle of hay that I'm after, and I am all as likely to put my hand upon 'em at this end of the rick as the other. . . . Heaven help me!" 'Twas the man's daily, nay, his hourly prayer.

Another day's company-keeping of this chance-met pair drew on; the patient slept much and obeyed silently when aroused. Mother Lea and her son Tod pottered in and out expectant: their weather-burned, expressionless masks betrayed little, their behaviour much. The nurse effaced himself, his charge ruminated, a spiritual crisis in progress. Before the afternoon waned he turned his face upon the bolster and spoke.

"May I ask, my dear sir, to whom I am indebted for all this?"

Justin, in the window-seat, turned from the light and, laying down the pocket Testament in which he was reading, gave his name and rank; no more.

"Ye are reading in a good old book, sir: may I beg you to read to me? I am obliged to you. The tenth of Luke's Gospel, then, if you will, and near the end. 'A certain man,' ye know."

The Major read, his patient listened; and when he spoke next it was after a long pause which the reader had mistaken for sleep. "A good story, sir; I thank you; oh, an excellent story; but I think I could tell you as good. That stranger whom the other put himself about to serve was a plain, honest journeyman; we know nothing to his discredit, anyway. The good fellow paid for his nursing, and he did well, for an honest man is one picked out of ten thousand, as the play has it. But what shall we say of a gentleman who lifts a dying rogue from the rut and nurses him with his own hands?"

"Hush, my lad; you are exciting yourself. Your head——"

"Rings sound again, sir, and by your leave, will lie the easier after I've told ye my story." He told some of it, Justin nodding sympathetically.

"I am a blackguard and a footpad, Major Justin; let us start fair."

"And, before that?"

"Nay, I'll not extenuate. You see what I am."

"So much is evident—was evident. Come, sir, you have told me nothing that I did not know. Regard me as your doctor, not your farrier," he smiled encouragingly. "I can see the symptoms without your help, but need your help for

their history. How did this disease begin? And what has been its courses? In a word, what brought ye to this?"

"Temper. I was up at Oxford, at Christ Church, as servitor ('tis a dog's life, but let that pass). A gentleman commoner insulted me; I demanded satisfaction; he passed my cartel to his tutor; the dons were scandalised; I was sent down."

The curt, unemotional terms of the recital did not deceive Justin; some tragedy lay behind. He waited; it came.

"It hit me somewhat hard, for I've no backers. My mother dead; of two aunts one doing more than her share, and one—well, an old cat among her cats. Yes; it fell inconveniently for a man in his fourth year just going up for his degree." Again the sick man stopped, it might be to command his voice. Presently he resumed: "You have been young, sir. Meeting my man in Tom Quad the day I went down, my temper got the better of me; I beat him handsomely." There was a spark of very human satisfaction in the youth's eye; in a moment it was gone. "That put the fat upon the fire. A warrant was out for me. I had to look to myself. What was a fellow to do? I was hungry enough before night, I assure ye. 'I could not dig, to beg I was ashamed.' It presently came to—this. And now, sir, I think ye know the worst of me."

"My lad, I am honoured by your confidence. It pleases me more than . . . hum, hum . . . And, now, what next? . . . You would hardly have gone so far as this with me unless ye had something of a purpose, or plan (what ye will) . . . for amendment, I mean. Tell me no more than ye wish; but ye may like to hear from the lips of an old fellow (as I suppose ye would call me) that a bad start is not seldom well retrieved. I have seen life. I could tell ye of many a career begun better and ended worse; and on t'other hand, of a friend of my own" (Old John Chisholm's name came to the front as he spoke, but was ordered to the rear), "who began worse, but is now a person of large means and excellent consideration. Ye seem weary of your way of life."

"Both weary and ashamed, sir. What ye say heartens me to make the attempt. Lying here, I have thought it out. It would appear that Almighty God, for reasons of His own, has given me back my life. (By the plaister at the back of my head 'twould seem to have been a near thing.) I swear to ye I am not worth the consideration, but He thinks otherwise; has a better opinion of me, we'll say. After all, He made me, He knows. The least I can do is to justify His preference. You see with me? Naturally. Well, then——" a long pause, "I am His man henceforth." Another long pause. "First, for restitution. Luckily I am but a beginner at this

devil's trade, and can lay my hand upon those whom I've robbed. You smile? But I've kept tally. They shall be repaid—as I can manage.”

Justin's eyes shone, but he held his peace. The calm assurance of this youngster took him: he doubted his ultimate success no more than his penitence.

“But, sir, my last crime was serious. Tell me, when ye stripped me was there no shamoy belt upon me? None? Then 'twas taken from me as I lay on the road. A pity, for I had promised myself . . . But, things might have been worse, the best are still under my hand”—his eyes turned to the mantelshelf. “Might I ask . . . would ye be so good as to reach down that crock, so, . . . and to empty it upon the quilt? I thank you.”

A handful of many-coloured stones slid clicking forth, such as Justin, who since his trusteeship had made acquaintance with the uncut gems of the Orient, had never seen before. These, as he guessed, were antiques, valuable not so much for their material, nor for their size—although most were large—as by reason of their artistry and rarity. There by his hand lay one which he could vaguely appraise, an inch-broad plasma, its grass-green translucency miraculously sculptured into the semblance of a sleeping nereid. Most were camei, pale, banded chalcedonies, or crimson-and-white sardonyxes, agates, carnelians, and sards, all of which seemed to have been subjected to some process which had rendered them plastic as gum, or tender as cheese, and to have thus lent themselves to the delicate tooling of Greek fingers before resuming their native hardness. The sick man touched one and another, frowning perplexedly.

“Whoever has lost these will be missing them badly,” suggested Justin.

“From what I have heard of him I should say so too, nor will he be satisfied with the return of these. There were twice as many more in that belt of which I was robbed. *Robbed!*” he laughed softly, “*Quis tulerit Gracchos?*—You must know that these, and the rest, are the property of the father of the gentleman commoner of whom I spoke. They were stolen from him by his domestic chaplain, an old school-fellow of mine—no, not a friend by any means, nor colleague (I have worked single-handed). I had no finger in the business. As for my knowing of it, my lord advertised his loss England over; never was such hue and cry, or such rewards. That was a month ago; my part came later, yesterday was it?—or a week since? How long have ye had me here? I ran into my old enemy and relieved him of his brush. (No treason in that, sir. He was a brute to us lower boys at Shrews-

bury; we warned him when he went down we would be even with him some day.) As I was saying, I stripped him of his spoils. 'Twas delicious; you would have laughed yourself, sir—the deplorable figure he cut!” The bed shook to the sick man’s silent mirth. “In my own mind I proposed to hold these things to ransom, to get some of my own back upon them, you understand.”

“Hard upon the father, sir.”

“So I can see now. At the time I said, ‘All in the family.’ But, how to return ’em? These without the rest? My Lord may refuse to accept my explanations, eh?”

“May I ask his name? ‘Lord Duddingstone?’ What, the Vice-Chairman of the East India Company? I wonder . . .” the Major fell into a brown study, from which he presently emerged. “It occurs to me that I might be of service to both sides in this. Oh, I am known to your man, in a way. I think he would at least give you a patient hearing whilst in my company.”

“Hush!” murmured Repton softly, lifting a warning finger, his face grown keen as a knife. The Major cocked a campaigner’s ear, for the delicate wintry silence which normally lay around their retreat was disturbed by a new voice.

“No, dame, I’ll stand it no longer. Ye shall not fob me off with a—— Listen to me, I say! Where are your manners? I’d overlook your absence from church if ye’d give me your word that ye’d go nowhere else. But to have people of mine following these Ranters! Blind me, ’tis past bearing! What am I here for? Tell me that?”

“For your tithe, as I’e allus heerd, passon.”

“Woman, I am set for the guidance of this parish.”

“Something of a blind guide at times, eh, sir, bean’t ye?”

“We’re human, dame, and have each of us his faults. You, I perceive, have added to your old ones this new methodistical vice of picking holes in the coats of your betters. Not that I profess myself perfect, Heaven forbid! Often and often I have told you and the rest, ‘Don’t ye do as I do; do as I say.’”

“Ay, ay, sir, the old story of the handy-post, showing of the way but ne’er follering of it! But, beggin’ of your pardon, sir——”

“So ye ought, dame, and not for your impertinence only. ’Tis schism, ye have fallen into; d’ye hear?”

“La, passon, they’ve bin a-foolin’ on ye again. I ain’t fell inter nary ditch, wet nor dry, since I found salvation and giv’ up going to the Griffin. Do that woman’s ale be too strong for your head to-day, sir? There be the same chair inside as you have slep’ it off in afore. Step in and welcome.”

"Tchar ! But, these new friends of yours, these Ranters, what have ye learnt of them ? " asked the other, finding the homely creature his overmatch at a mutual inspection of personal frailties.

"Why, sir, afore I went with they People of God, as you calls Ranters, I was that ign'ant . . . I was that ign'ant . . ." (searching Heaven and earth for a similitude) "I was as ign'ant as what you be now ! "

"That is enough ! And don't think you've done with me. Woman, I know that about ye as might bring ye to the stocks, ay, and to the jail, if not to the gallows. 'Tis reported of ye that ye harbour disorderly characters and suspected persons. Aha ! that touches ye, does it ? I'd hate to lay an information against a parishioner, or to bring trouble into my parish. I'm not one to go out of my way to help the exciseman. The King may do his own business, and I'll do mine. I know that an honest widow-woman must live, and need not in a general way ask too closely who knocks late for a bed, nor about his horse, nor where he came from, nor whom he met by the way. But this Methodism is another guess matter, and I must do my duty and stand by the law, dame. A suspected person is what they call your lodger."

"Then, they as calls him so calls him out of his name, passon. As an honest, God-fearin', Christ'n woman, I'll take my Bible-oath as there bean't one breath o' s'spicion about any person as I've had on my place this two year."

"Humph ! " growled the clergyman, and stumped away.

"S'spicion, indeed ! I never had none ; 'twere certainty ! " said the housewife beneath her breath as she clattered off upon her clogs.

The eyes of the listeners met ; the roguish gleam in Repton's faded to a steady gravity ; he arose upon his elbow, collected his breath and made essay of his strength. Holding by the newell of the settle that filled one side of the hearth, he steadied himself with a swimming head.

"There spoke Mother Church, sir. I know the weight of her hand ; 'tis 'miching malecho, which means mischief.' I must be off." He reached for his clothes.

Nor too soon. Three hours later the taciturn, wooden-faced Tod opened the door and led in from the yard naught less than Repton's horse, bitted and saddled. The good beast, fat and in excellent case, got his master's wind and blew him a kiss and a low nasal murmur of friendly recognition before submitting to be led past his couch and so on through an inner door into a narrow and almost dark lean-to closet adjoining—a place wherein he could hardly lift his head nor could think of turning himself about, but which possessed

the compensating advantage, shared with the pigeon-cote and draw-well, of being one of the three last places in the parish where one would look for a horse.

"As near as all that?" inquired the invalid of the boy upon his reappearance.

"They be all round the house, sir. . . . Didn't see us come in, I reckons. 'Tother nag may speak for herself. But where be I to put you, sir?"

"Don't give a thought to such a trifle; I'm not caught yet by a lot. Just you get out of this, my good Tod, and be looking the young innocent ye are."

The lad grinned and slouched forth, hands in pockets. Justin arose and moved to the window. A man was in the act of entering the stable; two others were approaching the house. He knew their sort. He turned him about: the room was empty; not a latch had clicked, but his patient was gone, silent and light as a fox.

The campaigner's eye swept the apartment, but found no clue to his man's hiding-place, nor, what was at least as important, any hint that another than himself had used the room since a week. He drew easier breath: this thing might yet go well. "Attack's the word; we offer battle," said he smiling to himself; and opening the door to the yard, stepped forth sedately, leaving it wide behind him.

The number of visitors had increased. The Major, hand in fob, gazed serenely over the heads of three catchpoles and caught the eye of the parson behind them.

"Good-day to your reverence! . . . And, what can I do for you? And what, may I ask, is your man doing with my mare?"

The parson and his constables finding themselves accosted by an unarmed middle-aged personage of a most peaceable address, whose every word and gesture bespoke breeding and the assurance engendered by a good conscience, changed countenance and fell to excusing themselves.

"Put her in again, my lad," said Justin, addressing the fellow who had led his beast from her stall. "Yes, yes, . . . I accept your apologies: your duties are your excuse. I myself am a soldier and understand. Insufficient information is apt to lead to mistakes. For your comfort, Master Constable——" he produced his commission. "Justin, you see, is my name, lately landed from the Indies, where I was known as Major of the Thirty-ninth. You are pleased to be satisfied? I thank you. Be so good as to drink this to His Majesty's health, and to mine too, if you will. I wish you all a good-day." He turned without another word or greeting to the clergyman, who could not conceal his chagrin, and

slowly retraced his steps towards the house, his hand again in his fob.

"But, but, he may be, all the same," stuttered the parson in his own defence, in reply to the mute reproach of the catchpole's eye. (To have been fetched upon this fool's errand!)

"Gurrh! What be the sense o' talkin'? All we've got to go by is a brown blood gelding; the mare's a roan Norfolk. While as for the man, the 'Scholard's' a youngish bloke, six foot in his stockings. *That* the 'Scholard'? If you'll take my humble advice, Mr. Parson, you'll be sort of gently gettin' along home and settin' to at your Sunday's sermon. *That's* what *you* be fit for." The broad shoulders arose in disgust.

Justin from the open doorway watched the invaders off the premises.

"Are they gone, sir?" the low, musical, laughing tones came down the chimney. It appeared that his patient, having mounted the hearth-side settle, had stepped up into the wide flue, and now was in temporary eclipse, his feet planted securely upon the staple of the roasting-jack.

Young Repton's reformation stood the test of a rapid convalescence. The lad was as hard as a nail and could sit his horse within a week, but there was no looking back. Those hot fever dreams had burnt deep. The man was a changed creature and on fire with a purpose. He had arisen from that cottage pallet-bed with the conviction that a life had been remitted to him, and that that life was no longer his own, but was owed to a Higher Power.

How was it to be spent?

Justin made no suggestions, well content to listen and let the heaven work. They were riding south together.

"You are monstrous good to lay aside your business for me like this, Major; I dare swear 'tis more important than mine, but . . . I'll not pretend that I'm not depending upon you. You see, with me 'tis a commission or nothing. I'll confess to shrinking from the ranks, yet, God knows it may come to. . . . In peace time a fellow without a name gets no further than the anteroom: but, with you, and this state of things across the herring-pond——"

"And with France upon our backs now——"

"Yes, and Spain talking big, I may get a colour, if not a cornet. I'm good for nothing else," playing with his rein. "Major, I've not told ye my name yet; to know it may cause ye embarrassment until I've my pardon. 'Repton' will do as well as another; 'tis a genteel one, and I come of good stock. My poor father, whom I've no clear recollection of, was a

soldier. I fear he made mistakes ; it runs in the blood. Yes, I'm fit for nought else ; besides, I'm due to my King."

"I have seen some service myself," said Justin, with an old campaigner's reticence. "I would as soon see ye started on a civil profession. What say ye to the Church, now, or the Law?"

The youngster's face fell. "I'm out of the first, sir, thank God. Had ye seen how our Heads drank and carried on at Oxford ye'd ne'er set foot in a church again. We've six Archbishops in these Islands ; His Grace of York I know nothing for or against, nor of Armagh, Tuam and Cashel. Stone, His Grace of Dublin, is a four-bottle man and the hardest liver out, save Lord Northington, whilst Canterbury's Sunday routs at Lambeth were public scandal until the King stopped 'em. No, thank ye ! Neither Church nor Bar for me, sir."

War was in the air. Men talked it at table and in the inn-yards, yokels thrashing in the dusty wayside barns laid flail down and leaned across the half-door asking for news. Brown-faced women at the cross-roads were patiently eager : they had sons in 'Mericky, sons who had sailed with Howe, and never a word had come since.

The unnatural and wounding wickedness of the Colonists filled every heart with a pained anger. These Virginians, for whom we had shed our blood and treasure in two hard-fought campaigns, had turned against us. 'Twas shameful ! What was more, they could fight. The stay-at-home English had always understood that in some obscure manner our kin across the sea had lost the peculiarly British inheritance of pugnacity ; had hoed it into the rich soil with their tobaccos, or distilled it out of themselves with their rums. "Colonials can't fight," was a proverb ; every old soldier who had served under Braddock would tell you as much over his mug of beer. But events were drumming another tune now. We were wrong, as usual.

And so much of this fighting was of a new and un-English sort. Ambuscades and night attacks, scufflings in covert like poacher and keeper. In other fields we had known whom we fought and seen our foes' faces. You met a Frenchman and broke his head. In the Carolinas it was a messy job. Farmers came snivelling to headquarters with a poor mouth, tales of wrong and damage from rebels, beseeching arms to defend the plantation, or to cover the red-coats' communications ; you lent a musket, and next moment the "Loyalist" had skipped behind a tree and was for putting a ball through your gizzard.

Hence the war had grown excessively unpopular, and volunteers proportionately scarce. Even the country gentry

hung back. The quality of the commissioned officers had deteriorated, and a lusty youngster of good address and appearance, well backed by a gentleman of influence with a service record of his own, might feel pretty sure of getting his colour without too many questions asked.

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"You must be wondering, sir, how I dare to ride the turn-pike." The Major admitted as much. "'Tis like this, sir; if there be a warrant out for me, there were never two descriptions that tallied. I had seen that most of the poor fellows who took to the road were betrayed by their women, so I lived quietly; or they betrayed themselves when in liquor, so I drank small beer. Or, again, they were known by the horses they rode, for you cannot disguise a beast's action, and every man can carry the points of a horse in his eye; so what did I? I robbed on foot, and masked, and chiefly by night, but shifted my pitch openly by day, and on horseback, giving out that I was a china-ware painter (and I have put in a week or two at that art between-whiles, at Burslem and Worcester). I do assure ye I have rid beside the officer who was out for me, and have discussed my probable identity and movements. Oh, 'twas a life!" He smote his thigh with a laugh. "May God forgive me!"

The fit passed in a moment. The youth's chin sank upon his breast as he rode, his eyes filled and closed tightly. When he opened them again it was to look with a sort of wistful wonder upon an elderly horseman who was passing ('Twas beside the ruined cross that stands in the Horse-fair in Banbury). The man was spare, fresh-coloured, and high-featured, a cleric by his mode, and wearing his own white hair as long as many a woman's. He had laid his rein upon his beast's withers and read in a book as he rode.

"Now, sir," said Repton, when this singular figure had passed beyond ear-shot, "there is a man for you, whom I could have understood believing in so sudden a change of heart as I have professed; but, in yourself, who have seen the world, such credulity surprises me and beats me down."

"And who may this acquaintance of yours be?"

"That is a Mr. John Wesley, The Reverend John Wesley, I suppose one may call him, for they say he is in orders; he was at Lincoln College before my time; oh, a fanatic, if you like, but a marvellous man."

"I never heard the name," replied Justin; "but, then, as you know, I am come back to a new world. But to return to what you are saying. Why should you suppose that such as I should think scorn of a man for a sudden change of front,

or have doubt as to his staunchness? We see many strange things upon active service. I, myself, have witnessed a harder heart than your own soften more suddenly. Ay, my lad! 'Twas upon ship-board, in the midst of an action between the frigate in which I came home and a French pirate in the Mozambique Channel. The man I am to tell you of was a petty officer of some sort, a master gunner as I think, a navigator at least (more than a boatswain or quartermaster). I believe he had lost some command in the merchant service before shipping in the Company's Marine. As I recollect, he commanded the after-battery, and would lay each gun with his own hands; and this was the saving of us, for, owing, as our captain said afterward, to the foulness of our bottom, and the superiority of our enemy's model, we were raked early in the action through hanging too long in stays, and by chance lost the captains of four guns."

"That sounds bad for a frigate, sir."

"It might have been worse than bad: the men were discouraged. They say one chain-shot took off all the four as they stood, match in hand, waiting for their sights to come on. But this man that I am telling ye of was of such goodwill and activity, that as I saw myself, he was extraordinarily serviceable, springing from gun to gun as each was sponged out and recharged, laying and firing with such judgement and luck that he presently shot away the enemy's fore-top mast, which brought him to the wind and gave us leisure to refit, for we had a main-yard of our own that needed fishing."

"I'm no seaman, sir, but it sounds as if you were now upon an equality. Could you not have improved the advantage?"

"Our captain thought to have done so. Whilst the French were clearing the raffle forward, our men got sail upon us and attempted to get to closer quarters. (Did I say that the enemy had won the weather-gage after raking us?) Our after-battery being put out of action we had nought to answer him but our forward battery—bow-chasers, I fancy they called 'em—and to this part of the ship our master-gunner was bid that we might have the advantage of his skill. I went with him, there being nought doing abaft at the moment, and admired at the fellow's cool hardihood as much as ever I admired at anything in my life. Having but five pieces wherewith to reply to the fire of more than twice as many, he was hard put to it to keep his guns' crews to their stations: the casualties were heavy, and the poor Jacks did not stand to their work as stoutly as perhaps they had done had they been better treated and rationed before the action. In the result the officers had to man the guns, the actual laying and firing they had the sense to leave to their master-gunner (Furley was his

name, now that I think on't). This man, though wounded twice by splinters, made the best practice that ever I watched, whether ashore or afloat, and fairly beat the Frenchmen from their guns; for when we had got to point-blank range, say, as far from her as yonder tree, the letter-of-marque, or pirate, was for making off. She had the legs of us, but must pass for a few moments under our broadside, and there was a general expectation that our skilled gunner would improve his opportunity. What think you? When the chase ceased firing (for her guns, save a stern-chaser or two, no longer bore) our champion raised his hat to her and bade her God-speed!"

"You don't say so! Was he hit about the head, sir, or faint?"

"Neither. He professed himself no longer a fighting man; and despite threats and entreaties walked aft to his former station and, sitting down upon the carriage of an overturned gun, covered his face with his hands. Without him we could do but little; in another minute our shot was falling wide. The action was over."

"What excuse had he to offer?"

"Merely that he had at that moment heard a secret Voice forbid him to take the lives of fleeing enemies. Later he went farther, and professed himself a Quaker. His captain was naturally enraged, for he was counting upon making prize of the Frenchman, and there was highish talk of trying him for mutiny, keel-hauling him, and I know not what, but the fellow's services had been so conspicuous, and his conduct up to a point so meritorious, that we all besought his commander to be content with reducing his rating. He lost his berth and was sent to mess with the waiters for the rest of the voyage, but, as I found by speaking to him upon his conduct, he was entirely satisfied and at peace with himself over his refusal of duty; and from being one of the rudest and foulest-mouthed of the ship's company, yes, and the most brutal to inferiors, he had grown all in that moment the most civil and helpful. 'Twas a marvel: we all remarked upon it."

"A brave fellow that, sir. I should like well to meet with him, and the more so if, as ye say, his right-about-face gave ye warrant to believe in mine."

The Banbury road was free to Repton, but since Carfax might easily recognise the ex-servitor of Christ Church, a detour seemed advisable. Upon the high ground of Little Moor the youth turned in his saddle and gazed long and sadly upon the city wherein he had striven so unavailingly and suffered so keenly,

"There is one man in Oxford whom I would wish to see again; a watchmaker and lapidary, an ingenious tradesman, but too honest to make money. He is a Quaker, and must have known of my performances; indeed I told him how things stood with me, yet he lent me five guineas at my need; yes, without security or reasonable prospect of repayment. A good heart!"

"Him ye shall repay the first, my lad," said the Major.

Riding such stages as Repton's head could stand, they put up at country quarters, and were thrown at times into rough company, which the Major handled with a discriminating tact admired by his companion. He could be prompt, too, on occasion; and when his pacific bearing towards a drunken ostler was misconstrued, the taller fellow was all along upon his face in a trice, whilst the small, cool stranger, with a knee between the aggressor's shoulder-blades, and one back-twisted wrist in chancery, held him down, vociferous but unhurt, until a constable could be fetched.

With others he dealt upon other lines, but with equal success.

At Aylesbury the Lion was full, and every room engaged, for a fight was afoot for the morrow, and the two friends must needs share a harness-room fire with a third traveller, a bull-faced, bull-voiced person, with just a smack of the sea about him, who alternately smoked and sang snatches of psalms, being, as was evident, in high good humour with himself.

*"Yea, I have run through a troop . . . a troop,
And by my God have I leapt over a wall! Selah!"*

Whiff, whiff, whiff.

The weary travellers were just dropping off when the fellow trolled forth again:

*"He teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight,
So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms!"*

(One in the eye for they Neatsfooters!) "Whiff, whiff.

"My good sir," said Justin, blinking and smiling, "you are in excellent voice, but we would beg of you to let us sleep."

"Sir," replied the other sententiously, "what says the apostle? '*Is any merry, let him sing psalms*'; and I am merry!" whiff . . . whf. . . . "*'Thou makest my feet like hinds' feet!*' (in a figure)" pushing home a toppling bavin with a broad-toed sea-boot. "I don't mind your sleeping; why should you mind my singing?"

Here Repton opened his eyes and exchanged weary smiles

with his friend, who had made up his mind that here was a fish that must be played.

"As to singing, no, sir. We admire music, for ye know, 'The man that hath no music in his soul Is meet for treasons, strategems, and spoils'—yet——"

"It jingles well, but," wagging a ponderous head, "I couldn't lay finger to the passage. Not in the Apocrypha by any chance? I owns to bein' weak there; elsewhere in the Book I be bad to beat. You two be smilin'—'tis plain ye be in high sperrits, and, as I be in the same, I'll tell ye my circumstances, and ye shall rejoice with me (as 'tis written), then we'll praise the Lord and turn in."

"Excellent!" replied the Major, nudging Repton's impatience. "Give us your story first and your leave to sleep after." And the big fellow, knocking the dottel out of his pipe, settled himself in his chair to begin.

"Sirs, ye be gentlemen as any man can see; I be Zabulon Sweetapple, the Lord's servant, and the last, the very last, of the Anointers. Yes——" in reply to Justin's questioning glance at his stained blue coat and tarnished brass buttons, "that's tar on the skirt, for a sailor I be, though born hereabouts, for Chinnor is my native, but, bred to the sea notwithstanding, for my Verse was such as my dad could do no else—Genesis, forty, thirteen, '*Zabulon shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be a haven of ships.*' And in havens and in ships I does abide as a rule, though happenin' out of a berth through havin' property to dispose of.

"'Twere like this. When I left home as a younker, we Anointers was still a strongish Cause, and had Tents of Blessing all over the Chilterns—Wendover, Ellesborough, Monks Risborough, Watlington, etcetery; but whiles I was in the Indies they falls out among theirselves, seemin'ly. 'Twas the nature and quality of the ile. One says Neatsfoot; 'tother said Train; so they sorter splits up and divides the Tents among 'em; and bimeby them muckin' Neatsfooters goes and jines the Latter-day Samaritans." The narrator spat upon the back-log in a disgust too deep for articulate expression.

"But, praise the Lord, my old dad stouted it out to the last. Tarr'ble bad he wor when I came home three weeks back. Seems as if he had no insides, like, and could git no ease. I 'n'inted him and 'n'inted him pretty well all over, but the pains were something crool. So the neighbours they fetches doctor, and he come and stand in the door, a-holdin' of his nose (the moment I sets eyes on him I knows there was no good in he). 'What have you been a-doing to the patient?' sez he, 'N'inting him with the ile o' blessing,'

sez I. 'Then you'll foment all that off of him and foomigate this cottage afore I looks at him,' sez he. And nat'rally I speaks up, and off he goes. But the women they cuts arter him and comes back saying we was to poultice father wi' salt of an almanac and puppy-heads.* We couldn't find no almanac, but we laid hands on a *Robin Hood and Little John*, and biled he down with Farmer Winnick's puppies and clapped the mess on, but it done not a mossel o' good.

"You had a-thought, mebbe, as how father was through with his speeretool experiences, but norrabit. The better the stuff the more it'll stand. Parson comes along and he stands out half acrost the lane, same as father and the 'hull lot on us had got the pest, and he ups and sez, sez he, 'Sweet-apple, arter pizenin' my parish for nine-and-twenty year, your time's come. Hell is gapin' for ye. Now, for the last time, will ye repent and be reconciled to the Church afore 'tis too late?'

"'Oon't,' sez father; 'Christ's my guide. Hallelujah!'

"'Then I oon't bury ye,' sez parson.

"'God's will be done,' sez father, kinder thoughtful-like, 'But, I shall stink.'

"And off goes parson.

"So he died, a fortnit back, did father. The werry last of the true line of the Old Anointer elders he were, and before he went to Glory he 'n'inted me in his place, and left me the last o' the Tents, the one as fell to his share at the discorruption. Just a double cottage gutted and seated, with a parcel of land, but handy, being at cross-roads.

"Them Samaritans comes arter it, but I sez: 'You hain't got the right savour about ye.' (A true anointer can be winded acrost a eight-acre field. Why, when my old dad have bin on his rounds with his Vial o' Blessing in his coat-tail pocket, I've known Squire Ashcroft's foot beagles leave the line of a hare to run hisn. Ah, yes, Train is the true stuff, what the Apostles used of old; Neatsfoot hain't no virtue, no more'n a shotten herrin'.)

"So they sends me one Farmer Winnick, an elder o' theirs, and he says, sez he: 'Young man, p'raps you'll put a rizzonable price upon that empty messuage o' yourn, for,' sez he, 'my garden runs down to the fence, and I'd like to throw it into my garden.'

"'Get thee behind me, Ahab,' sez I. 'The Lord forbid that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers for a garden of yerbs.' But he made out as he was merely referring to the burying-ground: the premises might stand empty.

* Sal Ammoniac and Poppy-heads?

“ ‘Yes,’ says I, ‘when your Neatsfooters ain’t holdin’ forth and carryin’ on in ’em. This house hev bin called a house of prayer, but ye would make it a den of thieves!’ ”

“You were a trifle severe upon a prospective customer, sir,” remarked Repton, interested in spite of weariness.

“Knew me man, sir. He jest smiled and bid me forty-five pound. ‘Sell my Tent o’ Blessing for forty-five?’ sez I, ‘Never! not a groat under fifty.’ (But, oh, to think of partin’ with a place o’ washup, wheer often as a child I’ve set and sweated with dumb terror whilst Elder Juggins held forth upon the Pit o’ Yell. Yearneest he wor, ay, that yearneest—when the Power were upon him and a drop o’ good yale inside ’um. Fact, if you’ll believe me, sirs, when he come to the opening of the seventh seal I’ve sin the spittle fly the length o’ this here room.”

“But, the cottage, man,” cried Repton, diverted but yawning.

“Ah, yes, about that Tent: it were the Thursday night as we parted, and this evening he were round again. ‘Young man,’ sez he, ‘your prayers is heard. I lain the matter afore the Master, and He sez: “Go thou and give that pore strayed sheep the fifty pound as he axes, for he warnts it wuss nor thou.” So, here ’tbe.’ ‘But,’ sez I, ‘did the Lord tell ye to do that—ezackly that, Mister Winnick? For, to tell you the trewth, you s’prise me. I never did hear yet as the Lord sent His servants on fools’ errands, and it stands to reason He must ha’ known as how I sold my Tent to Mr. Wesley half an hour arter you refuged it.’

“So here I be with fifty pound in hand, a talent as you might say, and no way wisible o’ bein’ faithful in a few things and doing a bit o’ business with it. This here fight, you’ll say—well, I comes along here thinkin’ there might be a call for me to-morrow (I have a gift of bone-setting), and I jest run my hand over the Buckinghamshire champion (the Londoner I know the reach of). This chap is big enough and quick enough if so be he’ll fight on the square, which is just the p’int. No, I puts not a pound on him. But if my old mate, Tom Furley, was a-going to step inter the ring to-morrow, blest if I wouldn’t back him for all the Tent made. A rare man is Tom, a sailorman same as I be, and has gone foreign. So, sirs, I’m back to the sea again, but not till April be out.”

“Weather?” hazarded Repton, amused by the fellow’s garrulity.

“No, sir, ’tis not fair weather I’d wait ashore for, but for the Mile-Endium, what is due then, as I make it. Failin’ that, I’m for a mate’s berth. . . . And, now, genel’men,

if you'll excuse me, I'll beg ye not to keep me awake no longer."

It was on the day's riding after this episode that the Major closed a long silent mile by slapping his thigh. "*Furley!*" said he, "Tom Furley! I knew I had heard the name, and it comes to me. That queer fish last night that talked so long and smelt as of train-oil, must have known the master-gunner I told ye of in his unregenerate days."

"Well, sir," said Repton, "saint or sinner, he seems to have been all of a piece; for 'tis a point in a man's favour to fight on the square."

BOOK III

THE CHANCES OF TOWN

CHAPTER I

THE HOME-COMING OF SUSAN

THE December day was far spent when the Chester stage drew in under the archway of Blossom's Inn, Lawrence Lane, Cheapside. Sue, weary as she was, and shaken by the jar of the cobbles during the last two miles of the journey, was aroused to curiosity by the vivid life of such a city as she had never conceived of as possible. She hardly heard, for the rattle of the stones, the dry advice offered to her, and to the other lady passenger, by the dean who had ridden inside since Lichfield, nor the "Oh, las!" and "Did ye evers?" thrown off by the woman at her side, a person in widow's weeds, still young and fresh-looking, the latest addition to their company, who had got in at St. Albans. What part of her mind the girl could disentangle from the distracting lights and cries, the driving, hurrying crowds, the horses' heads at the window, and the occasional grinding of wheel against wheel, was engrossed by the low-pitched, almost tender farewells breathed into her ear by the Irishman when an interval of darker street permitted the confidence. His manner had grown strangely friendly upon this, the last day of their journey. She had never known the like from one of his sex, and whether she would or no, the woman's lore, the mother-wisdom, of her hostess of the Griffin, put resolutely and even hotly away so often, recurred and found lodgement in her little bosom. All unsuspected by herself, her imagination had been fed by carefully graduated advances, the intrusions of a masculine influence against which she had at first arisen with instinctive virginal repulsion. Later she had

contended less strongly, and with flutterings of advance and recoil had listened and had given ground; yet, at whiles she was displeased with her eyes and her ears for seeing and hearing, and upbraided her blameless self by night for small civilities conceded during the day's journey; some traitorous, ancestral voice meanwhile within her excusing her complaisance.

There had been small tentative presumptions upon his part before the presence of the Lichfield clergyman imposed a restraint upon his gallantries, and since. At some inn by the road, at which a stop had been made for lunch, a young Scots gentleman awaiting means to reach London, but disappointed of a seat in the Chester stage, had sate at their table. The youth was tall, lean, and high-featured, courteous and well mannered, but for some reason the Major had thought proper to snub him.

The girl, drawn instinctively towards the one person of her age, had accepted some trivial service at his hands, but had not repeated her civility, seeing that the men would have been at one another's throats with but little encouragement. Not that the Scot brawled: he left what words passed to the Irishman, ruling, if not contenting himself, with a laboured and vigilant politeness.

It was after this scene, in which Tighe had not shown to advantage, that the girl had passed an almost silent day in his company, but had been touched by his penitence towards evening, and relented so far as to reply to him.

But what excellent company he had been upon the whole! how various, how amusing! His stories of service—for he had made no secret of his profession—had alternately horrified and fascinated. His (supposed) disablement had moved her pity. What extraordinary creatures were men!

Since the small, tree-embowered cathedral village, with its three ruddy, weather-eaten spires, where the clergyman joined them, Mr. Tighe, as Sue believed the Irishman to be, had adopted a demeanour of gentle, taciturn courtesy. But, once upon this last evening, she had found him pressing her hand. Her own had been instantly withdrawn, but the experience had fluttered, alarmed, and, must it be admitted?—amused her. The warmth, the weight, the muscular vibration of those great fingers wakened within her thoughts of she knew not what. She tingled and shrank, and, withal, smiled in the friendly darkness. It would be soon over now.

A man and a woman!—the simplicity of the primal relation, its necessity, its universality strike one silent. Yet narrowly considered, you shall find plentiful exceptions to

its rule, the antique Rule of Two, deficiency upon this hand, excess upon the other, misfits that pass muster, sound workmanship tossed aside. Here, for example, stands me a natural good fellow, seemly, frank, and brave, a man's man, and what is more, a leader of men, in whom, for some reason inexplicable, women see naught, with whom the good and the bad of the sex will have nothing to say or to do. And, here again, stands me his counterpart, a man whom men instinctively distrust, a little contemptible, shuffling rat of a fellow, say—or, just a “poor so-and-so,” or, say again, a strapping, presuming mass of manhood with a manner objectionable to his kind; all's one, big or little, he has sorcery, the touch incommunicable, and women, old and young, gentle and simple, good and bad alike, are sensible of the charm; both those who resist and those who yield must admit the mystic drawing. And of this fellowship was the Irishman.

Suddenly they were at their journey's end, a city inn-yard at night, a scene of bewildering bustle and sound. The steps were down, the insides were alighting, and Sue must leave the warm confinement of the vehicle that had grown so familiar to her; no home, but a refuge of a sort, and the only one she knew in this turmoil. She must out and take her stand amid a crowd of rough, strange, preoccupied men-folk, each pushing and crying his own concerns. Oh, the rudeness of ostlers dragging pairs of steaming horses by their heads! Oh, the incivility of porters, with their “By yer leave, madams!” elbowing one another aside, and thrusting off interlopers. The pressure, the confusion, well-nigh benumbed the faculties of this gently bred country girl.

The lady-passenger had perfunctorily wished her well; the dean had said “Dear, dear,” and had exclaimed upon the remissness of her friends, but without proffering practical assistance. She had satisfied coachman and guard. She had lost Mr. Tighe. “Stand where ye are,” he had bidden her; “you will certainly be met; your aunt (it is your aunt, is it not?) your aunt will be sending a coach for you, that is certain.” He had bowed low and gone, the last of him being a glimpse of his tall figure in chat with that insignificant long-nosed young man who had used the seat beside the driver. But no one had come. She was beset by porters capping to her, offering their services in this queer, new, clipt jargon of theirs. A blackamoor accosted her, bedizened in blue liveries—the creature was plainly in drink. She turned from him: he was clouted and sent about his business in tears. A big, red-faced fellow was beside her in battered tricorne and long drab riding-coat, with a multiplicity of shoulder capes. “Miss Travis,” said he (the fellow had

her name), "I be sent by yer haunt. This yere yer trunk? Ho, come along o' me, my lady." Sue accompanied him, doubting nothing.

The coach drew up before an unlit house in an ill-lit street. The driver having thumped the door with his whip-stock, threw down the step. He had put down her trunk beneath the iron link extinguisher, and turned upon her demanding his fare. The man's haste and rapacity startled her, as with fingers as yet unused to the management of a silk-net purse with its two steel rings, she fumbled in the half-light. She had seen another coach leave the adjoining house as they approached, and now a third was turning the corner of the street. The man's impatience grew, his demeanour lost the last trace of civility, he would have her look quick and not keep an honest man in the street all night: madams should know where to put their hands upon their fares. 'Twas a crown he would take, not a copper less, "swop-me-bob" (whatever that might imply). He cursed what she timidly offered for an (unblessed) half-bull, demanded more, snatched at the purse, and missing it, gripped her wrist. Rapid steps were approaching, her heart sank, she did not cry out; she was in the hands of the Philistines, and still her aunt's door remained closed. Her adversary, redolent of beer and onions, hung over her, swearing and shaking her. Next moment he was tumbling in the kennel and Mr. Tighe stood over him. He silently picked from the pavement the coin the creature had let fall, and as the other had arisen and was breathing battle, sprang at him and struck him again and yet again. The girl stood trembling upon the doorstep, watching the men, both tall and not ill-matched—the coachman the better with his fists—beating one another beneath a hanging oil-lamp. In a few seconds the determined onslaught of her champion had prevailed, the ruffian fell a second time, and whilst lying was soundly drubbed by his conqueror, who seemed wholly overmastered by his passion. But the street was arousing, doors were opened upon the chain, and some one from an upper window sprang a rattle to call the watch. Then, out of the ring of darkness around the fighters, stooped a pair of long arms, and Mr. Tighe's wrists were caught in a grip more powerful than his own. Fortunately for himself and for Sue's ears, he was breathless, and before he could recover his speech, his captor addressed him in slow, grave tones, as of a man measuring his words.

"Thee has done enough. . . . Let thy man be. . . . No, I am not of his gang, nor of thine; but just for peace. . . . Up and off with thee, driver!"

The fallen man, who had been covering his ear with his arm,

arose, and finding his enemy in irons, so to say, wiped his mouth upon his cuff, and getting to his box, drove off whipping hard.

But the most of this Sue had not seen. When her deliverer was overpowered, as she supposed by some confederate villain, all that she had ever heard told of the lawlessness of the streets of London came back to her. Shrieking her best, she beat upon the door with her little hands, nor ceased until, to her amazement, she heard behind her Mr. Tighe's jolly laugh, and judged things to be less serious than her fears had led her to suppose.

She turned, her coach was gone, another was standing at the door of the adjoining house. Mr. Tighe, somewhat breathless, but in evident good humour, was beaming down upon a man of less stature than himself but of more considerable girth and reach, a short-legged person of middle age (old he seemed to Sue by his grizzled chin), a mariner by his sea-boots and frock, the salient features of his square figure being a pair of long and massive arms which hung elliptically clear of his sides.

Did the girl take in all this at a glance? I know not. We are percipient of far more at a momentary view than we could reproduce in words of description, yet not of more than may recur to memory after an interval. The child was conscious of the proximity of a new male personality of a reposeful carriage, which somehow reassured her, she could not have said why. Instinct came into play. Why does a baby cease crying when suddenly placed in the large, firm hands of a man?

That Tighe, or Boyle, should have submitted without resentment to the active interference of a stranger, a common person, too, and should have accepted the position with good humour, may seem out of his character. But the man was no fool. When first gripped he had supposed himself in the hands of an enemy, and had put forth his whole strength, nor doubted of instant success. His effort had failed, and simultaneously he was aware of the coachman's flight, and that whoever was holding him was his master and well-wisher, whom to resist was folly. His forced laugh of acquiescence earned him instant liberty and restored his equanimity, for the publicity of a street broil was no part of his scheme. Sue, beating upon the door, had seen nothing; neighbours, disappointed of their sensation, were closing casements; he was impatient to be alone with the lady.

"I have to thank ye for saving me from basting a very paltry fellow, sir; one who would, as I think, have been none the worse for a sound thumping. But let that pass; ye

meant kindly, and now I'll be bidding ye good-night." He drew himself up grandly.

"Yah, yah, bor,—what of the young 'ooman?" replied the other, in quiet, matter-of-fact tones, queerly nasal and new to Sue's ear. Any previous relationship between this Irishman and the lady was not in the mariner's mind. He conceived himself as much interested in her as was the other, and approached her, checking an involuntary movement of his hand to his hat-brim.

"Oh, is it all over? Is he gone? What a rude man! Oh, Mr. Tighe, how can I thank you? What a chance that you were so near. And he said that this was my aunt's—Miss Draycott's. But I can make no one hear."

"Miss Draycott's, madam? But, she is—gone. There now. Did not ye get the news in time? Lawks, now!—that's a pity not to have heard."

This fell from a woman at the door of the adjoining house, an elderly person, thin and long-faced, with a narrow-bridged, drawn-out nose, squared at the tip over a wide-lipped protuberant mouth, an arrangement of feature suggesting a cow. Her hair was in papers, a misshapen *papillotte* over each ear heightened the resemblance. Thus thought one half of Susan's mind, while the other half refused to grapple with, or face, impending calamity. The curl-paper over one ear was coming undone. "The cow," thought Sue, "the cow with the crumpled horn! Oh, I *must* laugh."

"Are you young Miss Travis?" asked the woman, the curl-papers shaking themselves with a mournful rustle. "Ah, deary me, but ye come too late, miss. Your poor auntie was buried a week ago."

"I know; but it was three weeks since, at Chester. I come from Chester," answered the girl, sobering herself with an effort, and now finding tears in the business.

"Unfort'n't young person! How's any one to tell her? I know nothink of Chester, my dear; 'twas here, next door, down them steps as you be a-standin' on, as yer pore auntie, Miss Draycott, was took last Tuesday as ever was—in her coffin, yes. Pore soul, 'twas somethink suddint, and she made a hard end of it, you bein' much on her mind. 'My pore, pore, innercent young niece,' says she to me: ay, a score of times, she did: and told as how you was on your way up from the country, a motherless horphin, and once started most impossible to stop, nor nowheres to stop at if stopped. And you to come to her 'ouse like this, and find her took! 'And the Lord, He knows whatever 'll become of the girl in London,' says she."

Sue's face fell; she was herself again, had rallied, and could

listen and think. This news touched her very closely, but was no stroke at her affections. She had never seen the dead woman, and knew but little of her even by repute, save as the eldest and least genial member of her mother's family, who had held no communications with her sisters, and had only at the repeated requests of the dying woman in Chester given a grudging invitation to a niece whose existence she had ignored for eighteen years.

During the journey the girl had indulged in some natural speculations as to her unknown relative's appearance and character. She had little to go upon. Her aunt's advice had been non-committal: "Camilla and your dear mother never quite hit it off, my dear; Camilla, being the eldest, always had her own way, you see, and was, beside, a little peculiar, my dear; but we won't go into that."

Sue had been willing to give her love if love were possible: she had hoped. But what the use of regrets? All was over ere it had begun. There could be no grief in such circumstances, only dismay at the collapse of a plan and the absence of an alternative. The girl felt herself grow suddenly chilly: she braced herself, biting a lip in wide-eyed embarrassment. Before her was the dark, empty house; behind her the dark, empty street.

"Aunt Camilla dead, and buried, and no news? No word for me? But where can I go?" Upon the last word her voice trembled with an inflection suggestive of the bleat of a lost lamb.

She turned from the cow-faced woman in the doorway, who exchanged swift glances with Tighe. The seafarer, if slow of speech, had an eye; but Sue saw nothing.

"One thing is plain; ye can't stand in the street all night," resumed the woman. "Come inside, my dear, and talk things over a bit. And, as this gentleman knows ye——" she stood aside, holding her door invitingly open. Tighe bowed ready assent.

"Hospitable offer, begad! Ye have an excellent heart, madam. What say ye, Miss Travis? Shall we sit for a minute and see what can be made of it? I profess myself half-stunned by your predicament; my heart bleeds for ye; my——" The door closed upon his incomplete avowal of sympathy. The little white bird fluttered into the springe.

The mariner, most stolid of men, looked up the street and down the street, and upon the bill pasted upon the door of the empty house. It was a short notice of sale dated a month earlier. He drew from his pocket a cutty already charged, and proceeded with flint and steel to make a light, holding the stem between a pair of big yellow dog-teeth.

Meanwhile within doors the woman of the house told her tale, a rambling story, in the clipped speech which sounded so strangely in Sue's ears. The creature wondered and lamented, and parenthetically suggested, and would be calling her Maker to witness the truth of it all, until even the frank nature of the young stranger conceived doubts.

Mr. Tighe, nodding gravely in sympathetic sort, sate apart, letting the narrative proceed. Bit by bit the circumstances took shape in the girl's mind. Her aunt had died suddenly and in poverty. "Which the men were in the 'ouse when she breathed her last; 'twas inhuman. Them dratted brokers hev gone and cleared the place to the knitted bell-pulls. Not a farden for nobody, my dear! Which she owed me nine good shillin' and sixpence, she did; 'strewth, wish-I-may-die-if-'tain't!"

"She is my relation. I'll repay ye, ma'am," said Sue. But the woman, with Tighe's eye upon her, declined the money.

"No, no, my dear; and thankye kindly. But, where to put ye up for the night? My every room is let, and to gentlemen; a clergyman for one (which I 'ears 'im a-movin' about over'ead). No, I can't 'ave ye 'ere; no, nor can't honestly say as how I knows of a soul as would take ye in at this time o' night, without some letter from a friend, and wanting the good word of a 'ouse-older. London lodging-'ouse keepers hev to be that perticular. Our kericters is precious. There's the Lord Mayor and the Watch to consider."

"But I cannot lie in the street," exclaimed the girl, her predicament looming high and dangerous before her.

The cow-faced woman folded her hands, and, ruminating silently, allowed this aspect of the case to be considered. Her features were never at rest; her eyes were over her shoulder, down at her toes, in the dark corners of the room, whilst the jaw behind that wide, loose mouth, was softly going all the time.

Tighe, convinced that his moment had come, struck in.

"Madam, me dear leedy, your position is crool; 'tis precarious; 'tis more, for 'tis desprut. Your bereavement, your definceluss youth, your hilpluss sex appale to me." He arose and paced the room. "They claim me loyle support." He came to a stand between the lady and the door. "There is but wan coorse for a man of feeling, for a gentleman to take. I would offer ye me all, me purse, me sword, me hearth (if I had the forchune to possess such a thing), but even your angelic innocence must be awayre that such offers are insults onless coupled with the proffer of me name"—throwing a chest. "Begad! I'll do ut! Here, madam," advancing

a step, "take me as I stand, a poor soldier of forchune, Major Cornelius B—— *Tighe!* As yer husband I shall have the right to protict ye. . . . heart and hand, Miss Travis. Or, may I not addriss ye as Susan? 'Pon me sowl, Sue, I can offer ye no more, and no less." He dropped upon his knee, and reached for the child's hand; it hung by her side, and now for a moment lay passive in his hold.

"Gracious 'Eavins, what a noble 'eart!" exclaimed the woman, wiping an eye with the corner of an unclean apron. The girl shuddered and disengaged her fingers.

"*Hus-band? Marry?* No, no, not yet! Oh, *what* shall I do? Oh, let me go!" She freed herself with an effort and sped past him to the door, only to be adroitly intercepted by the woman. To the window she rushed, choking and panting piteously; the casement gave, her head and shoulders were through; there, beneath the lamp, stood the same square breadth of manhood, solid and silent, whose promptitude and temperate restraint had not been lost upon her.

"Oh, oh, man!" she wailed. The mariner's dark visage was turned to hers; he clapped his pipe into a side-pocket, and stood alertly to attention, a pair of steady eyes shining in the lamplight.

"What ails thee, my gal? What can I dew for thee? Yes, I'm a-comin'."

"The deuce! this spoils all. She'll be shrieking directly. No, I'll have no force," said Tighe to the woman, whose arms were around Sue's waist. "Where now is that confounded parson?"

The door opened, the priest's foot was on the threshold; behind him pressed the mariner, a four-square tower of self-collected strength. He swung the clerk aside without a by-y'r-leave. "What be all this?" he said, taking post by the girl.

Tighe's eye sparkled; prompt in action, he grew tense with desire to close and thrust forth, but now it was the woman's hand upon his arm which restrained him. "Let be; I'll have no fighting in my 'ouse! Play him; he's simple. Ye'll want a man to give her away," was her low word in his ear. She felt the knotted forearm relax; the man grunted assent; he understood her and she him, though acquaintance of but ten minutes' standing.

Susan was clinging to the mariner. "Oh, sir, she's dead. I've not a soul. . . . I'm lost." Her voice broke. The woman and Tighe began together, the latter gave way.

"Here be a pore young female throwed on London streets, in a manner of speaking, for 'tis as she say, her auntie dead and buried, and the sticks next door seized and sold no longer

ago than yesterday. 'Tis ruin for a girl. She've absolute nowheres to lay her 'ead. But this kind gen'elman, wot knows no more of her nor myself, outer pity and a good 'eart, hups and hoffers her marriage and the cover of 'is name."

"That is so," said Tighe shortly. The parson, the new-comer, cleared a nervous throat in the background. "Can I? May I?" he whispered, but none heeded him, for the grave, slow sailorman's eye, which seemed, as Sue afterwards thought, to be used to immeasurable distances, turned upon Tighe, who nodded grandly in reassurance.

"But I won't—I can't. Oh, if it wasn't so dark, and if I knew the ways of the place, I would go somewhere, find some one. But it's all, all. . . . Oh, *what* shall I do?" wept the girl, beating the wires of her trap, a resurgence of the counsels of her bedfellow at the Griffin flowing in upon her to the confusion of inbred virginal maxims. All that she had refused to listen to, all that she had failed to understand at the time, which had been imprinted upon her memory nathless, by the becks and meaning smiles of the goodwife, these, she found, had become part of herself, neither to be forgotten nor expelled. Here and now, with breathless haste and outcry, as it seemed to her, her life was suddenly at the river's brink, darkness and the wolves of the waste behind, the last shelter missed, the last lights out, and before her feet, dancing and unsteady, the unwelcome bark of marriage, with its captain, her master, a humane and manly figure, bidding her grandly aboard.

This Mr., or Major, Tighe, was it not really and truly noble of him? So disinterested to encumber himself with a baggage of a poor girl, an ignorant chit—and at a moment's notice, too. And—and—was he not all that the goodwife had recommended—big, and fine, and courageous? Oh, what did it all mean, this two-ways-looking heart of hers, which had never looked but one way hitherto? She fled from herself, spun upon her little feet, giving her back to her suitor, the woman and the silent priest in the shadows by the door, and took the sailorman by the rough sleeves, some instinct prompting her that with him, if anywhere, lay safety. Standing thus, the room's one candle, a guttering dip, threw what light it was capable of throwing upon the rugged hardness of the man's face. The girl pored upon and explored that face with a more earnest scrutiny than she had ever bestowed upon a human visage. Dogs and children are your true physiognomists: they seek what is there, not evidence to support a preconception.

The sailorman's puckered eyes had seen much hard fighting;

the brown, lined cheeks and chin of frosted stubble looked terribly grim, but the smile atoned for all. "Oh, I don't care what they did to him, or what he used to do to them; I am sure he is a good man now!" thought Sue, nor ever exchanged that opinion.

"Bid me do what I ought, sir. First mother went; then auntie (not this one); and now Aunt Camilla is gone too, and I—I've no one!" Again that note of desolation: "Oh, what ought I?"

"Nay, I know too little of your—thy matters," he began slowly, from a deep chest upon a breathing resonant note.

"Then take me with you, somewhere, anywhere; I should be safe with you."

"The slut: to think of it, with a common sailor!" cried the woman, throwing up her hands.

The hard lines about the mouth of the seaman deepened. "Home with me ye cannot go, poor lamb, for home I've none, save a caretaker's bunk on a snow that's lying in Bugsby's Reach, and that's worse lodging for a woman than this."

"God save us!" cried the woman. "There's sense in him too!"

"Woman, I'll thank ye—thee, I should say—not to be taking that Holy Name in vain," said the sailor solemnly.

"My man," interposed Tighe, curbing his impatience, "ye seem to know life. This lady has referred herself to you."

"Yes," mused the other, "she be a strand—out of her course, and on the mud for a tide. You lie by, you pass a hawser, you offer to salve—on terms. She've no ch'ice, as I can see. (But 'tis my human wisdom; I wish I'd time—I'm a young 'un at the Way, I am—I'd have some of our people here, bein' a simple man, myself.)" He mused again, the girl still clinging to his sleeves, shuddering with the strain of excitement too long sustained, but still hanging upon his words; when they came she would act.

"Take him, my gal," he said at length, "if so be 'tis lawful marriage he's a-offerin'. 'Taint our form, but thou'rt not one of Us, nor he, here. But where's the——? Ho!" as the parson stepped forward. "A clerk here?—*you*? Thee are mighty pat, young man! And where did thee spring from?"

"'Tis his reverence, the curate of this perrish, sir. He have lodged with me this three year," lied the woman glibly.

"Oh, Mr. Tighe, ye will be good to me, won't ye?" wept the girl weakly, yielding to fate. "Ye would not—ye could not treat me ill?"

All that remained of good in the man moved faintly and

strove for its life. He shook for one instant, then his worse self overmastered him. "Treat ye ill, my dear? Then may God forget me!"

The mariner, still doubting, yielded also, and with some prompting from the priest, a nervous snuffling person, with his back to the light, took the part assigned him, and gave away the half-consenting, wholly dazed Susan.

It was done. The bridegroom stooped to kiss his new possession. The bride, covering her cheek with her hand, gave a small, piteous outcry. The sailor, growingly dissatisfied with the part he had been prevailed upon to play, put aside the money offered by the Major, and looking the man squarely in the face, addressed him with disconcerting plainness.

"Friend, I've my doubts of thee, and about this business. I've acted in haste, and without waiting for guidance. Ay, anything be possible when ye're over the edge of the chart. There's a sound of broken water hereabouts; but I hope otherwise. Belay that!" The bridegroom's impatience was breaking forth in a hot, low word. "I'm not one of our Recorded; I've never opened my lips in full meeting, but this is the Word of the Lord unto thee: As thee treats this here young 'ooman, so shall He treat thee in thy hour of need." He clapped on his hat and went.

Tighe watched him forth. "I had thought one priest at a wedding was plenty," he blurted, and bit his underlip, perceiving, as even the highest stomach must at times, that silence became him best.

"La, Mrs. Tighe, my dear, I wish ye joy," cackled the woman of the house, reclaiming the ring she had lent, and bending for a kiss.

The bride shrank away from her, turning shyly towards the parson, whose tones tantalised her memory. His wig and bands reminded her of no one in her past life in special, but where has she heard that voice? The man gave her his back and left the room.

The bridegroom rounded upon her, jovial and brisk: "Susan, or Sukey, or Sue, shall it be? Ha, my love, that's over, and now for our coach and to our lodging."

"Oh, Mr. Tighe, what can I say? Just as ye will, of course. I am sure I am most grateful, for I'm dead tired; but are ye sure ye are not making a mistake? I am thinking ye will be finding me sorely in your way."

"Bless her pretty 'eart!" sighed the woman, and actually shed a tear.

The door went to, the wheels moved, they were gone. At the end of the street a man standing beneath a lamp stepped aside to allow the coach to pass, glanced keenly after it, and

retraced his steps to the house it had left. It was the sailor-man oppressed by an afterthought. He reperused the bill upon the door of the adjacent house, and smote his thigh hard. "Too hasty again; the Lord forgive me! An on-faithful servant I be, as usual; and up to ivery mortal mischief when so be as I walks alone!"

As he stood thus the door of the other house opened, the priest peeped forth, spied the mariner and was for softly reclosing it, but the sailor, who, for all his bulk, seemed a person of surprising agility, had his foot in the opening and his shoulder after it without a word.

"Nay, I must come in, bor," he said, and made good his entrance. The woman met him in the passage, shading her light with her hand.

"What's all this?" she asked tartly. The intruder, before replying, set his back to the door and looked the pair over. The woman met his scrutiny with voluble hardihood, but did not detain his eyes. But the priest, what had happened to him? He was now in lay habit, and wearing a brown wig.

"And who may you be?" asked the woman for the third time. "Friend of yours? D'ye know him?" she demanded of the priest, who stammered that he had never set eyes upon the fellow in his life.

"So? As bad as that? I feared as much after that there bill," growled the mariner. "And now, master Parson, a word with yew—thee, I'd say—we sim tew have bin a bit tew fast over that there marryin' business. What of the lines?"

"W-what l-lines?" gasped Baskett, and gave his case away with his face. His confederate, more ready, and affecting belated recognition, assured the questioner that the writing had been done after his departure, and the document taken by the married couple; but this would not pass.

"Pen, ink, and paper, Master Clerk. I didn't sign that there one she tell sech a lot about, soo I doubt 'tis good-for-naw-thing. But I'll put my fist to this."

There was no denying so determined a postulant, nor valid reason for refusal. The mariner, who seemed something of a scholar, scrutinised the document narrowly in the making, and again at his leisure when completed. "Tighe, he called hisself, eh? And didn't I hear thee call him 'Major'? Put *that* down then. Susan Agathy was her name, and don't be telling me ye don't remember her surname; her husband, as I hopes he be, called her Miss Travis when he cuffed the driver; put *that* down. And didn't her maiden aunt live next door? Well, put down, 'Niece to Miss Draycott—

Camilly Draycott—she spoke of her so.' (There be another name upon the bill, I see.) Now sign it, yew two, and I'll do as much. 'Tain't legal, I doubts, but 'twill prove something, the innercence of the young 'ooman, and——" folding and pocketing the document, "the guilt of some awthers. 'Night t'yer."

CHAPTER II

SUSAN THE BRIDE

THUS began tumultuously, at a moment's notice, a wonderful three weeks for little Sue.

Other women are wooed and beckoned by gentlest degrees to this momentous change in life and circumstance. The admiration and shy envy in the eyes of girl friends keep them up; their mothers' promptings hearten and assure; the gates of the home-croft of maidenhood close behind them; the forest glades of matrimony, endless, green, delicious, and mysterious, open as they move; they are led forward with laughter and timbrels; all nature rejoices; peals are rung, and a merry world called to witness and join in their triumph. And all the while, from out the dim forest comes with slow but confident step, the Other One, so strangely dear, so wonderful, the half-dreaded, wholly-desired comrade, the master of the new life that is to be.

In all this Sue had no part. The sanctions with which human society, ay, from its beginnings, has guarded its precious things had failed, or well-nigh failed, the girl at her need. Through no fault of hers, her young life was caught by the current or ever she was aware, swept along to the fall, whirled to the brink, and over. Morally it was a marriage by capture as fully as any rudest nuptial in the dim red dawn of man and woman.

But of this again she was ignorant, as of so much else which it behoved her to know. For the moment her little heart, of late so inexpressibly lonely and sad, was filled with abounding gratitude. The image which she, in common with every happily wedded daughter of Eve, had constructed of her husband, was of a magnificently condescending, all-glorious personality. A much-travelled Odysseus, home from his war-faring, had stooped to rescue and ennoble with his love (think, with his love!) a piece of helpless girlhood, all ignorance and poverty. It was marvellous. Her heart swelled to

think that of all womankind she—just she—had been singled out for the honour, the mercy of this well-nigh divine beneficence.

Shall we wonder, then, that the first fortnight of her brief honeymoon was a white-magical time, or that London seemed an enchanted city swept with merry winds of laughter, sunlit and pulsating with life and glee, boisterous, amazing, such as she had never conceived of as possible in her hitherto cloistered round of home duties and gentle affections?

Shall we compare it to the first evening of winged life that comes to some great fawn-and-purple hawk-moth? The constriction and darkness of its ten months' prison have given place to bewildering lights and alluring savours. Its new senses, all unversed in the impressions pouring in upon them, are tingling for experience, its limbs for action. Those new and marvellous wings, untried as yet, are uncrumpling, expanding, vibrating, are feeling for the elastic uprush of scented air that shall support them. Its big round eyes, all wonder and haste and pathetic ignorance, are moving, shining. Ah me, think of it; and think of this girl, just such a child of nature, aglow with health, a-tingle with life, and flushed, ere she was ready or warned, with the strong wine of a first passion.

Her little heart danced in her bosom all day, and twenty times a day she looked her hero over from top to toe, turning upon him starry eyes of admiration.

Doubt not that there were reactions, too; but that masterful and engrossing creature, her husband, absorbed her, body and soul. All the primal woman in her bowed in worship before his brawny strength; the mighty limbs seamed and pitted with the records of his conflicts thrilled her with rapture. She kissed his scars, shuddered as he told the story of each; lies, alas! albeit of the nine, four had been gotten in honourable warfare, if not as picturesquely as he could have desired. As to the small white pistol-punctures he must needs be silent or invent, and having begun 'twas so easy to go on. To this adventurer romancing was an effective and pleasing form of self-expression: so he romanced as to each and all, watching the doting, innocent eyes of his child-bride dilate with wonder as he regaled her with tales of exploits, every third word a lie, more duly told than the Turk's tribute. At this exercise the bravado of the man overstepped caution. Sue listened and marvelled, and felt at first wonder, then confusion, upbraiding herself for doubt when he plainly contradicted himself, but at length relapsing to a pained silence and lack of further interest: the first cloud.

"Sure as my name is Boyle!" out it popped—once. Sue's

wonder was appeased with : " A cant word in me old mess, me love." She *would* not entertain a doubt.

So sped her three weeks of passion, a delirium of marvels on which her long and happy after-life looked back with tremulous wonder. How could she have loved him so—or at all ? So might some slow-blooded citizen of the old time, whom the sudden onset of an enemy had at a moment's notice converted to a hero, review in old age the fierce hour when he, even he, a goldbeater, or loriner, or peaceful needleman, had swung bill and stabbed hotly knee to knee in the press until the French Fury ebbed away and old Antwerp was saved.

As for her master, he grasped his cup of delight with both hands and gulped fast, putting from him the thought of the future. He left to himself and to his pathetically grateful girl-wife small time for reflection. If London was new to her it was as new to him ; and whilst the money lasted he was for seeing and doing whatever was to be seen and done. It was an interlude of respectability and clean living. The man was amazed at his own capacity for innocent pleasure, and for a fortnight felt himself a boy again. From the Tower lions and Greenwich Hospital to St. Paul's, the Abbey, and the Parks, nothing came amiss to him while that delicious face was at his side, that small, soft hand upon his arm. The pace was hot, for the time was short. The girl loved him for his lavish generosity, nor knew that the money which was flying was her own, nor remembered the lengthening bill at their lodging in America Square, a little backwater between Crutched Friars and the Minorities. All went gaily in the main ; the gray weather of a London winter was softened and gilded and rose-tinted by the fingers of the mad little god, nor were her bright eyes opened to the drift of it all, nor dimmed with tears, until that rueful night when, after long waiting, her husband, her benefactor, whose pity for her distress had, as she proudly told her heart, warmed to love for herself, returned to her arms brutally drunk, and awaked the next morning savagely sober, hating himself, a **changed man**, with a detestable, unavowed purpose.

CHAPTER III

MONDAY AT DUDDINGSTONE HOUSE

DUDDINGSTONE HOUSE stood in Piccadilly, at the corner of Half-Moon Street, upon ground since occupied by a wine-merchant's shop. A red-brick-and-stone mansion designed by a pupil of Mr. Inigo Jones, its tall, narrow ground-floor windows were barred Spanish fashion, the better to secure the treasures collected by the first two Viscounts Duddingstone, father and son, who, caring neither for sport, women, nor politics, had amassed such a cabinet of marbles, pictures, medals, and gems as was hardly to be matched in Northern Europe.

The second viscount had indulged a taste for statuary and old masters, had travelled in Italy with Walpole, and enjoyed the hospitality of Mann—friendships which had descended to his son, who corresponded regularly by every mail with His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary at the Court of Florence, and dined with, and was jealous of, the master of the fabulous treasures of Strawberry Hill. In fact, the two virtuosi, the gouty old gentleman, soon willy-nilly to be Earl of Orford, and the third Viscount Duddingstone, were rivals. Walpole could with difficulty stomach the son of his old friend, his own pupil in matters of taste, bidding against him for a Byzantine missal, its covers encrusted with uncut carbuncles, or for a Greek urn of the best period, perfect as the day it left its maker's hands—prizes which the poorer man was never to secure, for the Collector of His Majesty's Customs, Clerk of the Pells and Auditor of Imprest, had a bottomless purse.

Nor was my Lord Duddingstone altogether at his ease in the presence of a man who had taught him the best of all that he knew, whose hand, though crippled, outreached him for whatever it chose to grasp, and whose agents were everywhere, and only to be outwitted by superior agility and stealth.

Yet they dined together from habit, and got upon one another's nerves over the Bordeaux, which was all that either dared take, by elaborately casual revelations of successes;

a gold inlaid sword-guard from sealed Japan, a *Judæa capta* in mint state from the temple of Juno Moneta itself.

It was the costliness of his hobby which had driven my Lord Duddingstone into politics. Money he must have, and money was to be got for a vote which he hated giving, but cared not to whom he gave if it had to be given at all. Coming thus into the arena late, he had surprised himself and his party by displaying in a novel field the acuteness hitherto restricted to detecting the forgeries and impositions of dealers, and to the outwitting of rival virtuosi. At the India House in Leadenhall Street he was already a power, and thoroughly enjoyed exercising his newly discovered faculty. He had placed his own pocket-borough of Hedon at the service of the Company, and had negotiated the purchase of Bossiney and Beeralston for the Honourable Court; in a word, the late middle-age, or second youth, of the third Lord Duddingstone might have been the happiest period of his life, but for an untoward circumstance for which there was no remedy. He was the father of a fool.

King Solomon has described this calamity from personal experience. I do not propose to compete with so classic an authority. Let it suffice that the Honourable Frederick Pelham Scrivener (Scrivener is the family name of the Duddingstones) possessed some of the less endearing traits of the youthful Rehoboam. Discipline, encouragement, and opportunity were wasted upon him; his tastes traversed those of his ancestors in every particular: the lad would sooner run a mile than look at a medal, or sit out a dozen cock-fights than con a codex. Where his book was concerned the young gentleman was bone-idle; he had low tastes and was a liar; worst of all, he lay under something graver than suspicion of pilfering from his father's cabinet.

It was a heart-breaking business for the Viscount; recurrent depredations had at first been set down to thieves; later to servants; dilettanti visitors were eyed askance. The place was fortified and watched like a madhouse, but costly trifles still disappeared, for the father could not bring himself to suspect his offspring. "I hung the shutters with bells and wires until I could scarce turn in my bed without setting the place a-jingling. I kept dogs until the house stank, and neither I nor my neighbours could sleep, but——" in a word, the fact was at length patent.

The young rascal must be sent from home. But whither? The Grand Tour, as played with variations by his father and grandfather, was out of the question. France was closed to the English traveller for the moment, and was likely to be inhospitable for years to come. Italy was not to be thought

of; the "Woman Country" of the poet would probably present to this booby scion of a learned stock allurements of a different kind from those which had charmed his ancestors. This was a cub which no bear-leader could keep upon the chain.

With what puzzled disgust, think you, did the disappointed father peruse the lineaments of his son? "Not mine, not one of 'em; nor his poor mother's; God rest her soul!" No, this hawbuck, half bully, half sneak, a terror to the maids, but, where a man was in the case, sensitively solicitous for the integrity of his noble skin, this domestic Cataline, *alieni appetens, sui profusus*, must needs be a throw-back to a *mésalliance* of six generations earlier. Several of our good families have some ancestor (or ancestress) who serves as whipping-boy for disapproving descendants. Irregular tendencies, vagrant tastes, and personal defects are charged to the account of a disreputable old ghost, but for whose interposition it is assumed that the race would have bred true to type.

"Confound that Molly Horrocks!" muttered the third Viscount Duddingstone, whose one successful effort at paternity had resulted in perpetuating the single undesirable strain in his blood.

There were Darwinians before Darwin.

"*Patria potestas*. Did ye never hear of it? Ignoramus!" grunted the exasperated father, looking over the tops of his glasses at his heir, convicted but unabashed. "Boy, in old Rome I should probably have put ye to death—yes, 'life and limb'—yes; and the Senate would have approved and given me choice of lads of the best families for adoption."

"Lord, sir! ye don't say so?" exclaimed the Honourable Fred, examining the condition of his tongue in a pocket mirror.

"Thieves are hanged daily, and why not you?" demanded the father with heat, adding (oh, bathos!) after a pause, "I'll send ye to Oxford."

So to Christ Church the scamp was sent, and placed under the eye of a tutor, whom his lordship was assured was a most competent person. "The companionship of ingenuous youth of noble stocks, and the softening example of pious and learned men cannot fail of effecting an improvement," said my lord, who was possibly a better judge of medals than of men. If there were any rough places in the paths of learning at Oxford the feet of the Honourable Fred never found them; everything was carefully made smooth for a tuft. The deference of the dons to a young gentleman who might at any moment blossom out into a full-blown peer of the realm

was a touching exhibition of our national characteristic. His degree presented no difficulties to examiners who had no intention of examining, or to an incorrigible dunce who dreamed not of offering himself for examination. It would be conferred upon a nobleman *in posse* whenever he should choose to honour an ancient seat of learning by suggesting that his name might be added to the list of her Masters of Arts.

His father, meanwhile, solaced himself with the success of a *protégé*, Octavius Baskett, by name, son of the steward of his Cheshire property, a nervous, studious lad, whom his patron had sent first to Shrewsbury school and later to Christ Church as servitor. The experiment might have turned out worse—or better. The man had done passably in the schools; his scholarship lacked style. Industrious he had been, and steady, being, as his patron hoped, too poor to be anything else; and having taken a degree and deacon's orders, was installed at Duddingstone House as domestic chaplain and curator of the family collections. So, to London he came, and his patron, a sanguine person, had his hopes of him, albeit this man of his making was not much to look at. The little, poring, narrow-chested boy, the dilling-pig of Baskett père's long litter, had done indifferent justice to his college breeding. The unformed snub nose had first thickened across the bridge, and then lengthened unconscionably, overpowering a runaway chin. The eyes, which had been wistful, had grown shifty, and were still small. The man stooped and was ill at ease in good company. He winced, and half arose from his chair when suddenly addressed by a person of condition.

"'Fore Heaven," ruminated the patron, "Walpole was right. I have but half done his business. When the fellow missed that scholarship I should have made it up to him, and not sent him to the servitors' table. This scraping of trenchers marks a man. I've wasted my silk. Here is my sow's ear back upon my hands, a sow's ear still. I believe I did once promise his father a living for him. Humph! His Majesty may some day make ye a bishop, my boy, but God Almighty could not make ye a gentleman. Meanwhile, ye shall stick to my medals."

Alack! the creature was a man, like the rest of us. Meat, drink, and the collating of manuscripts were not enough for him; and having too much time upon his hands, and living too high, his morals deteriorated. Pity him; his position was lonely, anomalous, neither one thing nor the other. A youngster with the education of a gentleman and the instincts of an inferior, debarred by his profession and surroundings from the society of the youth of either class. Yet society

a man must have, so, with an eye to his position and prospects, he was wont to pay evening visits to a house of call where he kept a change, whence in lay habit he might proceed in safety to study the night side of the Borough. But study upon these lines, however economically pursued, can hardly be prosecuted without money. Moreover, he was traced by his lordship's butler, an elderly man and a jealous; thenceforth the chaplain was in the power of that butler, who would have him into the pantry to play small games of chance with himself and the housekeeper, to both of whom Mr. Baskett presently found himself a debtor for larger sums than he cared to think about or saw his way to repay.

A weak will, costly habits, impatient creditors, and valuables within reach, what else could have befallen save what befell? For a while the catastrophe was postponed by the existence of those safeguards of which we have spoken; it was not easy to simulate a burglary at Duddingstone House. But at Duddingstone Chase the thing was conceivable. Nor was convertible spoil wanting. His lordship was a martyr to the fidgets; to-day such or such a strong box was in peril and must to the bank under guard; to-morrow this and that should accompany him to the north (armed outriders, of course). The best, the most perfect of his portable antiques he would sometimes secrete upon his noble person in belts of shamoy; and it was such a belt which disappeared one night from his lordship's dressing-room at Duddingstone.

Picture to yourselves the pallid misery of elderly retainers, the hot, helpless wrath of innocent suspects, the first, unreasoning fury of a hitherto indulgent master, wounded in his tenderest susceptibilities. In a matter of three days my lord was himself again. A trusty messenger returned from Oxford with assurance of what he most desired to know. The hand of the Honourable Fred was not in this, at least; he had kept his room and his bed for a week past in consequence of what the Dean called "a barb'rous and brutal beating perpetrated by a servitor." My lord hemmed; he knew his son, and servitors. Such do not turn upon gentlemen commoners without provocation extraordinary; he would look into the matter later. One thing at a time; the lost antiques first.

Although a window of the butler's pantry was known to have been found open at daybeak (so much the younger servants admitted under cross-examination—Baskett had brains of a sort), my lord refused to entertain the theory of a house-breaking. Nor would he charge his valet, albeit the belt had been taken from a dressing-closet to which none but this man and himself had access. Nor the butler, though

a pair of the man's boots were unaccountably muddied and wet. These, said his lordship, rallying his judicial faculties, are the artifices of a thief who has studied the ways of my household. Who has a grudge against these men? The valet, an elderly person, who, after an adventurous youth, had taken to religion, abhorred the sight of a card, and read *Law's Serious Call*, could offer no suggestion; he had not an enemy in the world. The butler was less certain. From him, and from his crony, the housekeeper, my lord learned curious particulars as to the goings-on of his chaplain. Small notes of hand were exhibited, with diffidence, for there the exhibitors felt themselves upon dangerous ground. Small but numerous were these notes, and considerable in the aggregate. My lord pinched a dubious lip.

There was nothing for it but a general search. Would his men and women consent to it? All, even the chaplain, agreed with alacrity, but nothing was found. Hope grew dim. Walpole sympathised. "Don't stint your advertising, nor your reward," he counselled. "Your thief must needs have less guilty confederates; it is to their cupidity you must appeal. Meanwhile, be comforted; there is but a limited market for your gems on this side the water. Aaron and Conti and the smaller fry have more to gain by pleasing than by robbing us" (my lord liked that "us"). "Yes, once put upon the market ye will get wind of 'em. Watch the south ports for the man ye suspect, of course; but I doubt his tempting the Channel. A classic, ye say? He speaks no French? Just so. 'Wait' is my word. And now, what say ye to this?" It was a Syracusan tetradrachm from the hand of Kimon, greatest of coin gravers, a feast to the eye. But, alack! poor Duddingstone, as his friend knew well, was not festally minded at the moment.

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Meanwhile the classic who spoke no French was having a poor time of it; his shillings were running low in that cheap lodging of his behind Pickle-Herring Wharf, on the Surrey side, where he sate biting his nails. He would venture the bridge under cover of night, suspecting every watchman he met, to bleat timid remonstrances into the ear of his master.

"A whole fortnight, and ye have not gone to him? 'Twill breed suspicion, I tell ye. See, here it is in the *News* again this week, but the reward is not raised. Ye had best be writing to his lordship at once. . . . But, why not? . . . And, consider, 'tis hard upon me, these delays. Here I sit, unable, until my character be cleared, to approach his lordship. He always promised me preferment, he cannot honourably

refuse. . . . But, anyway, I must be seeking employ ; and whilst ye hang fire I cannot show my face by daylight ; 'tis mighty hard ! ”

But Boyle, or Tighe, who could be as wrong-headed as any man alive, would drink his delicious cup of dalliance to the dregs first. Sue's garter had yet three guineas in it. Employment when it came would perforce come to him in his own name. As Boyle he would be reinstated in His Majesty's service, if reinstated he was to be ; but he had married this girl as Tighe. The dual personality would be hard to explain ; it would shock her, and he shrank from shocking her. Moreover, employment would be unlikely to come in a form which would justify him in encumbering himself with a wife. The hampered poverty of a married major was no part of his scheme ; yet, in his selfish way, he loved this child, and pushed from him as long as might be possible the inevitable moment of desertion—piteous and unpleasing thought.

Yet, since it was one of his maxims that a man's business should be driven and not drive, he would at length give his mind to his case, and thus it befell that a fortnight having slipped away, and no higher reward being offered, Boyle judged the right moment to have struck for answering the advertisement.

A guarded letter apprised his lordship that a gentleman newly come up from the north had had left upon his hands, by the most singular chance in the world, a collection of signets, bezels, and ring-stones, which appeared to him to be of considerable worth. And that, since his coming to Town, he, having by accident learnt of his lordship's loss, asked his lordship's gracious permission to pay his humble respects to him, for the purpose of ascertaining whether what he had found should chance to be his lordship's property.

Thus Boyle, writing in his own name from a coffee-house in Crutched Friars, to which the reply might be addressed. His lordship replied, giving him an appointment. The Major rubbed his ear briskly—a trick of his when in perplexity. This letter : what was he to make of it ? It was urbanely inscrutable, permission to call, no more. He read a dozen meanings into its three sentences, none of which would bear reflection. His lordship was a diplomatist.

Upon the day he presented himself at Duddingstone House well before his time. He was kept waiting in an anteroom for a half-hour before being conducted to his lordship's cabinet, a lofty apartment, walled with glazed bookcases defended by brass wire grilles, through which gleamed the backs of folios and first editions, valuable then, and thrice as valuable to-day. There were other evidences of taste and of appre-

hension ; the room was darkened by window-bars of singular and needless solidity, thought the visitor.

The master of the house sate with his back to the window, the light from which fell upon the papers he was holding, and upon others upon the table before him. It also lit the face and figure of the man who had just been admitted from the anteroom, and who had not been bidden to seat himself. My lord was of the school of his contemporary, Lord Chatham, who seldom permitted an inferior to sit in his presence save with a pen in his hand, and insisted upon his secretaries submitting documents to him "upon the knee." There was a clerk of some sort nibbling a quill at a table in a corner, and another person of superior but uncertain status stood beside his lordship's chair. The door closed softly behind the newcomer ; my lord, who at a first sight seemed but a pink-faced, inconsiderable little person in a morning-gown and slippers, looked up without speaking, and adjusted his glasses. His short-sighted, prominent gray eyes addressed themselves somewhat aggressively to his visitor from under a turban, and completed a leisurely survey of his man. He had not acknowledged his bow : the little dry specialist was taking in the personality of his visitor, the girth, height, swagger, and poise of him, and the curbed impatience of his lip. Some copper captain, he opined ; then, at the man's first syllable, "Irish," and the repulsion was complete.

"Mr. Cornelius Boyle, I believe ?"

"The same, my lor'd, late major of the Forty-first."

"You have some communication which you desire to make to me."

The aridity and coolness of this grandee got upon irritable nerves ; the tension showed itself in an increase of ceremonious politeness.

"My business, my lor'd, is to place before you some valuables which it has occurred to me may possibly be your property." Whilst speaking he had approached the table and had laid upon it the shamoy belt, which we have seen change hands twice before in the course of this story.

"Yes . . . yes . . . so I understand," remarked his lordship non-committally, emptying the contents upon a sheet of blotting-paper and arranging them in a certain order with reference to a printed list which lay before him ; this done, he coloured slightly and called the attention of the man beside him to certain gaps in the line, and folding his hands resumed his survey of Boyle, whose sense of injury was already moving. This was no way to receive a gentleman recently in His Majesty's service who had gone out of his way to restore stolen property to an entire stranger. He had anticipated a private interview,

had pictured himself gracefully producing the lost gems, had seen in imagination the delight of the noble connoisseur, had listened to himself relating the story of their recovery in the most natural and off-hand manner, a manner which could not fail to impress his auditor, who would be loud and hearty in commendation, and would presently fall to delicate suggestions of recognition. Thence the way would have been plain. Such had been his forecast, but the event was otherwise. My Lord Duddingstone was not alone, the presence of inferiors implied suspicion and was mighty unnecessary.

"His lordship awaits your explanation, sir," said the man of business. Boyle started slightly.

"Explain?—the way in which these things came into?—with pleasure. 'Twas whilst coaching from Chester to London on the thirteenth of December," began Boyle, and proceeded to give a version of the encounter upon Sandylane Hill that was true so far as it went, but not free from reservations. My lord followed the recital with close attention; at its close he considered the position for some moments before referring it to his attendant with a small nod. The man, who was apparently a lawyer, now took the examination into his hands.

"You wish his lordship to believe that ye took this belt, with its present contents, exactly as they stand, from the body of a thief whom ye shot under the circumstances just detailed?"

"That is so—from the man's pockut, where I was seeking me own purse, which the fellow had taken from me before I shot him."

"The coach, ye tell us, had gone forward; it was out of sight; ye were following at your leisure, and alone?"

"That's so, I was," replied Boyle succinctly, thinking the lie a safe one and due to his accomplice.

His lordship sate passive. His lawyer caressed a flexible nose. "Have ye anything more to add to your account," he said, "or do ye wish, upon second thoughts, to vary anything?"

"I do not," replied Boyle, fuming; "and, let me tell ye, sir, that I cannot but regard all this as exceedingly uncalled for, and my reception——"

"Your pardon, sir," broke in Lord Duddingstone, with so loud a voice and so brusque an authority that the Major's complaint was silenced, "You appear to misunderstand your position. You have answered my advertisement in the name of Boyle. (You are Mr. or Major Boyle?—I thank ye.) You own to having been in possession of this property since the thirteenth of last month (nearly three weeks). I have put to ye some not unreasonable questions, and have more to put, but even as it stands, your tale does not hang together.

No, sir——” the Irishman had bridled hotly, “for there was no person of your name travelling from Chester to London on the day ye mention. From inquiries which I have instituted I am in a position to prove that two inside seats were booked some days in advance, one by a lady, the other by a Mr. Tighe, and that both were occupied.”

Boyle started and opened his mouth, but my lord imperiously shook his finger at him and proceeded:

“Do not interrupt me, sirrah. At Waverton a third seat was taken by a person calling himself Venner, but whose real name is Baskett. This person and the other two passengers travelled to Malby Cross, where he and they lay for the night. He proceeded upon his journey in their company on the following day, alighted at the foot of Sandylane Hill along with the person Tighe, fell behind as the coach mounted, and subsequently rejoined at the top, still in the company of Tighe. So much we have from the guard and driver. Now, Mr. Boyle, ye must excuse me for failing to see where ye come into this story.”

“My lord,” exclaimed Boyle, “I am Tighe. The name was me mother’s. . . . Yes, I admit I am living at a lodging in America Square under an assumed name, and requestud your lordship to address your letter to a coffee-house, yes. . . . That I have preferred to pass as Tighe rather than as myself is asily explained. I have suffered misforchune. I stood me thryle as Boyle—Major Boyle—at Chester winter assizus for having the ill-luck to kill me man in a jule, my lord; and, under the circumstances, I submit the incognito was excusable.”

“Ha, the Roodee murder case,” observed his lordship dryly.

“My lord, I was acquittud!”

“The jury was discharged, as I remember, which is another matter. But I am not concerned to retry that issue, merely to discover how ye came into possession of my property. Ye have not replied to my point as to the presence of the man Venner, or Baskett.”

“’Pon me sowl, I had forgot the existence of the creature!”

“Yet ye have met him in London since.”

No answer. The Irishman, seldom at a loss, found himself upon dangerous ground. It dawned upon him that, whilst watching his confederate, his lordship’s agents had been also keeping an eye upon himself. The point was pressed.

“Come, sir, ye saw the man arrested at the county boundary. Such an occurrence is sufficiently remarkable in itself: ye surely had some natural curiosity as to the reason. You must have been aware that the fellow was no company for an honest man, to say nothing of a gentleman; he lay under suspicion, for he was searched.”

"Not in my presence," returned the other, clutching at a straw.

"Tchaw ! Why palter ? Cannot ye see that your tale will not pass ? From your own accounts, which are discrepant. Ye travelled under an assumed name with a person of ill-character, a fellow once in my service as chaplain—mine—who abused his opportunities to rob me. You did not know this ? I am not so sure of that, sir, but your knowledge or ignorance is immaterial ; the fact remains. Also, that whilst the thief was being searched the stolen property was in your pockets. It smells of covin, sir ; you admit it was there and offer an explanation which no sane man will accept. I would have ye to understand that the evidence I have in my hands would convict you ; the punishment might be death, sir, or it might be whipping and branding. I just mention the alternatives to show ye the predicament in which ye stand, Mr. Tighe, or Boyle."

The Irishman stared, but had not a word to say. My lord continued :

"You wish me to regard your meeting with Baskett as fortuitous. Ye have forgotten his existence, ye say ; yet ye have been seen in his company twice within this past week. You are believed to have supplied him with money. And now, after several conferences with this rogue, and after three weeks of delay, ye come forward and offer restoration of part of the stolen property."

"*Part ?*" echoed Boyle harshly, "'Pon me salvation there lies all that iver I found upon the thief. I swear ut !"

"Upon *which* thief, sir ? We have only evidence of the existence of the one whom ye accompanied to London. As for this alleged footpad of yours, do ye ask me to believe that ye killed the wretch out of hand, rifled the corpse, and left it on the road ?"

"Just that, me lord," replied Boyle, marvelling at his own self-command. This man could make him or break him ; he must stomach it ; but his heart seemed bursting.

"'Tis singular that ye did not breathe a word of your exploit to the guard or the coachman. 'Tis more singular that they heard no shots. 'Tis most singular that no corpse was found, sir : of that I have the coroner's assurance."

Boyle's head swam. What was this ? His story had been known and sifted before he had told it. This amazing little man must have agents everywhere. Had the pot-boy at Pickle-Herring spied upon him ? Had he blabbed in his cups ? Had Baskett peached ? Was his lordship lying to him ? His lordship was speaking again coldly and pointedly.

"Come, Mr. Tighe, or Boyle, where are the rest of my gems ?

These, in point of numbers, may be three-fourths of my loss, but in value do not represent a quarter of it. All the finer stones, the best-cut and larger *intagli*, are missing. Where are they, sir? I must have them."

Poor Boyle's brain was spinning. Talk of fortune's malice! Whoever heard of the like of this? A gentleman despoils a thief at the risk of his life and is forthwith accused of being in possession of stolen property, and bidden account for things of which he had never so much as suspected the existence. Normally he was a man of ready speech, loud, plausible, and quick of invention; but now he found his imagination bankrupt and his tongue tied. Meanwhile he was painfully conscious that the cold gray eyes behind the glasses were bent upon his confusion, and now the deliberate tones began again.

"What? No explanation—not even a reply? I had thought better of the resources of you Irish adventurers. I fear Mr. Tighe, or Boyle, is but poorly equipped for the part he is playing.

"However, I will no longer detain ye, sir; for the present, at any rate, ye may go. Ye will understand that the valuables ye are secreting are not marketable; they are of interest to some few *cognoscenti* only, worthless to the vulgar. Ye cannot pass them; their possession will certainly betray you. But to me they are priceless. I will admit to you that I have had you in the hollow of my hand for three weeks. As you have seen, your movements, your associates, your intimate conversations are all here"—the speaker tapped the papers in front of him with his knuckle. "Yes, we are aware of your hopes, ye are applying for employment." Boyle slightly started. "Now, sirrah, I will go so far as to condone your felony, and even to consider the question of your future, so soon as the rest of your plunder is replaced in my hands.

"In the meantime, as the companion of a thief, you lie under vehement suspicion, and will be watched. Ye may go."

The luckless Boyle found his way into Piccadilly half blinded with fury at insults which he was unable to resent. His first and immediate need was a victim. The man was in the mood to pick a quarrel with a blind beggar. By the time he had walked a mile some discrimination had returned to him. Of the two persons upon whom it was possible to inflict some of the mortifications from which he was suffering, he would spare his wife. Baskett it should be, and after a brisk round to baffle a possible pursuer, he broke in upon the evening meditations of the Reverend Octavius in no urbane humour.

"Soho, Mr. Ananias, ye have been keeping back part of the

price, have ye? (Oh, I have a scripture or two at me tongue's end as well as you canting Protestants.) What's that? Ye have *not* the bigger part of the what-d'ye-call-'ems upon ye? The jauce ye haven't! Then who has? Out wid ut!" taking the wretch by the throat, "Not that dead thief; ye saw me strip him."

In two minutes—and most uncomfortable minutes they were for the clergyman—Boyle had convinced himself that his confederate knew no more of the missing gems than he did himself. "Faith, I've half-throttled the baste, and exhibitud could steel. 'Tis shaking an impty purse I am; he has not the things by him. But, all the same, 'tis a poor wake baste, and not the sort that I'd trust to drink fair in the dark." Communing thus with himself whilst his victim moaned in a corner, the master turned suddenly upon his slave.

"Your Rivrence, 'tis time that we partud. Your prisince is compromising to a gintleman. 'Tis also offensuv to honust min. The law has its eye upon ye this night, and will have its claw upon ye to-morrow. What? Shtop that hullabaloo! There is just the faintust chance for ye. I will discind to particulars. Listen; three roads lie before ye. Ye have your choice to take the King's shilling; to take a lep off the wharf; or—to be taken and hanged. Fwhat's that? Ye cannot make up your mind? Thin we'll spin for ut upon the method of odd-man-out. The river or the gallows! Heads for Tyburn!" He tossed a guinea, his last. "Heads it is!" Baskett's teeth chattered.

"Now, me frind, pray to Whativer is fond of ye, for the choice this time lies bechune the hempen cravat and a marching regiment, and the Lord He knows which is the worse. (By the same token there's a recruiting sergeant in the tap-room of the Cumberland Arms at the lane's end.) Heads for Tyburn again! . . . Tails it is! Up ye get, and along with me. I'll be seeing this job through before I sleep. Ah, now! Have no care for yer duds; 'tis that small valise will hang ye yet, and 'tis little need ye'll have for chashubles in the line."

An hour later Sergeant Oakey of the 56th Foot was drinking to the health of the latest addition to His Majesty's forces, whilst the watch upon his rounds had found upon Pickle-Herring Wharf the wig, gown, and bands of a clergyman wound into a bundle and containing a note to the effect that poverty and persecution had driven the Reverend Octavius Baskett, Bachelor of Arts, to seek that justice at the Bar of God which had been denied him by his patron the Viscount Duddingstone.

"'Tis a nate touch that last," soliloquised the author of this flight of fancy, "and if it should appear in the *News* will hilp me to get even with my lord. Merciful powers, what

a riptile is that same ould haythen ! Will I iver see the day whin I can wipe that intoirely out ?

“ 'Tis a thought hard upon His Rivrence. Life in the ranks is not a giddy whirl of bouncheous luxury. I'm thinking 'twill take two corporals and their canes behind him to get the crathur up to the palisades. They had better use him on shipboard, where he can't run far. I am well shut of him ; but—what's to do nixt ? ” The question was a poser. The man saw no comfort anywhere, and sate late over his drink. After midnight he affrighted his young bride by stumbling upstairs to the room in which she had passed long hours of loneliness and suspense only to find her husband, when he came, in no condition for her society.

It was the poor girl's first experience of a man far advanced in liquor ; a horrifying initiation. He snored at last. She watched him from a chair, wrapped in her cloak and aching with cold and blows. God pity such wives ! Death hath no tragedy to compare with what life holds for them. Poor Sue, a three-weeks bride, and already arrived at this. God pity thee indeed ! He does. There shall be ending, complete, swift, and final, to this bleak chapter of thy hitherto gently nurtured life. But four more days of it ; bear up ! But thou dost not know, nor wouldst thou welcome deliverance—yet !

CHAPTER IV

TUESDAY AT THE WAR OFFICE. MAJOR TIGHE FISHES WITH LIVE BAIT

THE doors of the anteroom would not be opened for half an hour. Tighe and his young bride sauntered in the Park, killing time, and presently came to an anchor upon a seat, nor felt chilly; for although it was but the second week of the New Year, the air was extraordinarily mild, a fall of snow in November having been followed by the greenest Christmas that ever fattened English churchyards. The weatherwise predicted a genial winter; within a week they were to see the insetting of an arctic three months.

Sue was ill at ease; the poor girl was overdressed—her husband's doing: it needed all her grace and beauty to carry off the knots of riband of his choosing. Her timid protests had been overruled. She knew not why, upon this day of all days, instead of leaving her to await his return in their dull city lodging, he had dizened her thus and carried her west with him. Their sight-seeings were over, and the first brightness of her pleasure in him, and of his in her. He had grown harsh within these last few days, and she had learned to tremble at his home-comings. She guessed that things were going ill: she knew from chance-dropped words that his memorial remained unanswered, and that his attempts to secure an interview had failed. So much was divined: her master permitted no questions.

He sate beside her upon the Park-seat moody and silent, caressing his chin with the knob of his cane, watching the thin stream of foot-passengers tempted abroad by the unseasonable warmth and mellow beauty of the afternoon.

Fashionable London was out of town, but the times were anxious, and men who had reasons for wishing to know how matters were going, lingered up, or paid flying visits to the capital. Versailles was moving at last. At the War Office in time of war there was always something to be imparted, learnt, or picked up by a King's friend, or one of his depend-

ants, and something to be hoped for by less fortunate mortals. The strollers in the Park were of various classes and ranks. Chief Clerks and Assistant Under-Secretaries walked briskly and singly, or loitered two-by-two, enjoying the last of the delicate pale sunshine, postponing their work until candle-lighting time, whilst their juniors within-doors fenced with rulers and betted upon forthcoming cock-fights.

There were beggars too, but only privileged ones—old soldiers, friends of the Park keepers; a cast-off black servant with a cough might shiver dumbly to death upon a bourne-stone unrelieved. The sight met your eye a dozen times in a day during winter. It shocked countrymen new to London; the Cockney was used to it. Our ancestors were hard of heart.

“Bedad, we’ve wastud a crown’s-worth of fal-lals, me gyur’rl, and, what’s worse, another day,” grumbled the Major. Sue, about to reply with some hopeful counsel, bit her lip and shook down her veil beneath the too-pointed notice of a passing grandee. The gentleman, handsomely dressed in a claret-coloured coat, white tie-wig and laced hat, was dawdling by, his gloved fingers within the arm of a taller and more plainly attired man in bottle green. The two strutted and swung their full-skirted coats, peacocking in the mode of their day and order; both wore swords. Claret Coat was well in advance of the fashion; a clouded cane, gold-headed, dangled by a silken tassel from a ruffled wrist; the hand toyed with a tortoise-shell quizzing-glass ready for use. The two passed and repassed, deep in talk, and once paused for a minute, still chatting, with their backs to the bench occupied by Tighe and Sue.

“Dev’lish mild for the season, Jenky,” remarked Claret Coat, ogling a passing woman.

Bottle Green shrugged slightly at the interruption; there was a note of asperity in his voice—“as ravelled a skein as ever a fellow was asked to set finger to——”

“Accept it as a compliment, man. He didn’t send for me.”

“He knew ye better, March; ye wouldn’t have touched the business with that stick. Germaine has ruined our affairs in America. On the strength of his services, as I must suppose——”

“Minden?” inquired Claret Coat with malice, taking snuff.

“Ah, possibly; on the strength of his experiences in the field, shall we say? This nincompoop, with Barrington to help him, has amused himself with planning combined movements at the seat of war. I found my table-drawers full of miraculous strategy. Conceive, I beg you! Burgoyne was to advance upon Bennington, where he was bidden to expect Howe with supplies and reinforcements. Observe now (but

ye are not attending !) : Burgoyne marches, and as ye know, is cut up at Saratoga by that renegade Gates (an Englishman born : I swear it gives me the creeps), whilst Howe, who was planning *fêtes champêtres* in Philadelphia, never moves out of his lines. Why should he ? he asks ; and with reason. My predecessor had forgot to sign the despatch apprising him of his part in the affair. Worse, if possible, the fools had sent the powder intended for Philadelphia to New York, conceiving apparently that the towns lie as neighbourly as London and Westminster. Now, what say ye to that ? There's Germaine for you ! ”

“ George is a man of pleasure,” observed Claret Coat, as though he had mentioned a recognised profession, honourable, but incompatible with high office. “ I am another. We do wrong to touch business. A person of condition should stick to his *métier*. A Man of Fashion now has abundant calls upon—” his eye wandered, he had caught sight of Sue again, and was fixing her through his glass with an insolent intentness. The girl wondered at her husband's complaisance, and still more, when, as the two personages moved away, she caught the remark, “ A pretty face, that, begad !—too fine a woman altogether for a copper-headed Irishman, eh, Jenky ? . . . tell ye what, . . . even hundred . . . kisses me within . . . week.” The men were moving, the voice faded.

“ Oh, Con, come away,” she whispered, shaken with anger, but found this often impatient husband of hers unexpectedly cool.

“ Be still, ye small fool ! ” he murmured excitedly, his eyes a-glitter. “ 'Tis the Lord Mar'rch (His Grace the Duke o' Queensberry, that is now), and 'tother will be Mister Jenkinson, or I'm mistaken—Mister Secretary Jenkinson, begorrah, the man of all min that I'm thirsting dumbly to have spache with. Oh, the Duke *and* Jenkinson ! the Duke *or* Jenkinson ! both, or ayther ! Mother of Jasus ! in pity sind me foive little, swate, privut minutes with wan or the other of thim ! ”

“ But, Con, dear, ye did not hear what the wretch said ? What could he mean ? ”

“ Whisht ! be aisy, me dear ! 'Tis a man that cud make both our forchunes by a cock of his hat. 'Tis Mar'rch, me Lor'rd Mar'rch, I'm tellin' ye, the King's frind ; and the other, the man in green, is the King's War Minister himself ! ”

“ Oh, Con, ye don't say so ? ” exclaimed Sue, her indignation forgot in her zeal for her husband's advancement, “ Run after him, dear ! ”

“ In-throduce mesilf, is ut ? Faith, madam, ye're wake in the science of diplomacy.”

“ But, try ! Why not try ? Anything is better than sitting

here and seeing the world go by us, and we growing poorer. If I were a man I would do—something ! ”

“ Ye would, would ye ? ” replied Tighe, rolling in his seat. “ Madam, I take ye at yer wor’rd. Yer husband is in throuble up to his withers : so much ye do know ; and, ’pon me sowl, I belave ’tis yerself must pull me out. Fwhat wud ye do for yer husband ? ”

“ Anything, sir ! *any*-thing ! Try me ! ” She sprang to her feet.

“ Done wid ye ! I accipt. Ye shall take this cover,” he took it from his pocket (ready written and sealed, Oh, Tighe, Tighe !)—“ This letter, I’m sayin,” to the Right Honourable Mr. Jenkinson, the King’s new Secretary at War, and ye shall exur’rt yer powers of persueesion upon the man to injuce him to give yer husband employmint. D’ye see ? ”

“ Oh, Con, how could I ?—alone ? Would it not be improper ? ”

“ There ye go ! ” Tighe laughed savagely. “ Improper ? for a married leedy to address a gintleman upon her husband’s businuss, and with his consint ? and in a public offus ? Faith, ’tis I’m the fool for taking ye sariously. Ye’re just a toy—an incumbrance.”

“ I will go, sir,” said Sue humbly, biting a trembling lip. “ Indeed, I will do my best, sir ; but it seems somehow. . . . Oh, Con, I am so young ; do ye—are ye sure ye wish it ? ”

“ Wish ut ? Indade I do that ! Who’s afraid ? Will the man be ating ye ? think ye, that——”

“ Good-bye, sir ; wish me well.”

“ All the luck in the wor’rd go with ye, me heart ! Remimber ’tis for yer husband, for *me*, that ye’re fighting. An’ don’t be lookin’ me in the face impty-handud ! I’ll await ye at the Par’rk gates ; they’ll be shuttin’ this place for the night prisintly, I’m thinkin’.”

Sue tripped away, her little heart beating courageously, strung to the proper pitch of responsibility. Fail she would not ; she would win him back to her ; warm his cooling affection by her success in his cause. She got her lesson by rote as she went ; ’twas for Mr. Jenkinson’s ear and for none other’s ; neither Under-Secretary nor Chief Clerk would she waste words upon. A personal interview was her demand, upon the most urgent private business.

Her husband, biting his thumb-nail in keen suspense, watched her fade into the throng setting now towards the gates. He got a momentary impression, but of this he was not sure, of a claret coat moving in the same direction. Right or wrong, both figures were lost next moment in the falling dusk.

The anteroom was packed, every seat occupied, and the best of its floor-space filled when Sue gained the door. She returned to the corridor and made her petition to a passing official, only to be redirected to the room which she had just left. The lady timidly represented, the man shrugged, and would have passed on, but for the increasing pressure of the crowd. He withdrew his attention, his eyes roved, were looking vacantly over her head; suddenly they creased at the angles and filled with obsequious intelligence in response to recognition from some personage in the press. There was a light semitone, a low reply: "Yes, your lordship! certainly, your Grace!"

"Permit me, good people!" At a new voice with the unmistakable note of authority the pressure relaxed, a key turned, a hinged panel opened, and some one behind Sue passed within.

"You may follow, madam," whispered the janitor, directing the hesitating girl with his hand. The door closed behind her, she was for a moment in darkness, another panel admitted her to a twilight corridor, a latch clicked, a door upon the opposite side of the gangway opened, a *portière* shook, some one was addressing her.

"You wish to see Mr. Jenkinson, madam? Gad! 'tis fortunate, for ye have no appointment, I think. I am the gentleman ye seek. Permit me to precede ye." The speaker was holding the *portière* aside for her; she stooped beneath his arm, and found herself in a lofty but narrow room, barely furnished and inadequately lit by a pair of wax candles in a sconce above a table supporting a standish, carafe, and tumbler. The curtain had fallen behind her again; the latch gave a double click, due, as she later believed, to the shooting of a bolt.

Slightly nervous and strange to her surroundings, she turned and searched the room with her eyes; it was empty save for the minister who was advancing from the door into the ring of light cast by the sconce. Sue started, for here was the gentleman who had quizzed her in the Park. She had forgotten his name, but Con had not called him Jenkinson: but Con must have been mistaken, or she had mistaken Con. Here, at least, was the man whom her husband had commissioned her to see: she had achieved her first step with astonishing ease. Her courage rose: hope sprang within her. The gentleman approached bowing.

"Madam, Mr. Jenkinson appreciates this condescension. His poor room is seldom so graced. What service may he have the honour of rendering to so charming a visitor?"

He spoke with a sweet, deferential gravity altogether new

to the girl, and whilst speaking had handed her to a chair beside the table, himself remaining standing, leaning lightly upon the board's edge, bending toward her and somewhat above her, his strongly-marked, individual countenance fixed intently upon hers. This proximity was a thought too near for her taste, but might be the mode among the great, thought Sue. The man's glittering eyes, as hard as agates, daunted her a little at first sight, but held hers, and when he spoke again it was so encouragingly and kindly, and withal so softly, as almost to set her at her ease. How could she ever have thought him rude? (Within these weeks poor Sue had learned the existence of hyper-masculine terms and idioms permissible in the absence of women.)

She had plunged into her story—her husband's letter temporarily forgotten—a recital punctuated by her auditor's "La, nows," and "'Fore Gad, madams." It was all for Con. She did not spare her praise; and at each encomium the minister murmured: "So, indeed? I'll be sworn he is!" Things were going admirably, thought Sue. In a trice she found her diffidence gone, she trembled a little, but more with hope than agitation. This extraordinary man, still listening intently, had drawn yet nearer to her, was absently, as it seemed, stroking the small gloved hand which lay upon the table's edge beside him. (Sue thought to withdraw it, but for some reason, or none, it did not seem easy; yet, with an effort, withdraw it she did.) The minister was promising the finest things; Con was a man of a thousand, a valuable public servant, an acquisition to the forces; he should certainly be reinstated, promoted in time, indeed. But there was something behind, something conditional about these professions, something reserved: the issue lay with herself, it seemed. She did not understand.

But Mr. Jenkinson was certainly most kind, too kind; almost fatherly. (Sue had never known a father.) The white wig conveyed a paternal impression.

He was very close indeed to her now, yet she had not noticed him move. She faltered beneath his close, unwinking scrutiny, but once and again he helped her out, suggesting words which she found herself adopting. Hitherto she had thought of her cause, of Con, now, and against her will, she began to think of Mr. Jenkinson. He was undersized and not regularly handsome; his countenance was too lean, too aquiline, too imperious, too deeply marked. The eyes were dominant, but the smile, when it came, was vivid and winning. His carriage had all the dignity and repose native to an assured position. He was high-bred to the polished nails of those long white hands.

There certainly was no keeping eyes off him. Sue found herself staring, and blushed, yet could not withdraw her gaze. Presently she was aware of the incipience of an over-wise, masculine simper deforming the corners of that thin, hard mouth, a smile which never reached the eyes—eyes which seemed probing deeper and still deeper, through and behind her own, until they reached the back of her head. And then, all suddenly, as it seemed to her afterward, she was caught, taken, as the small fluttering bird is lured by the twig to which it has trusted. With palsied will she sate listening, acquiescent, all of her, save some deep-seated inner sense of rectitude which whispered its obstinate protest.

What knew she of the awful occult power of the human will? What do we know to-day? Substantially the question remains at the point at which Braid left it, his experiments verified but unexplained, possibly inexplicable.

In Sue's time this cult was still, as it has been from the dawn of human history, the stock-in-trade of witch-doctor and exorcist. Armed with its secret terrors, many a slave—for his little hour—has ruled a king. Periodically it has raged like a pestilence in high places, until plain blunt manhood, determined and ruthless, has extirpated the pest by horrid punishment. Then for centuries the thing has been driven under, forgotten, ignored, derided perhaps, or repudiated altogether.

The gipsy brought it back to us from the East. An Oxford scholar gave his life to learn it, says Glanvil; he never came back.

All down the ages one discerns a few dangerously gifted personalities who discovered unnamed powers in themselves and wrought dangerously, darkling, abusing their opportunities and usually making grim enough endings.

Under the Georges this by-path from the Tree of Knowledge no longer led to the stake. Its very existence was denied by that Sadducee among the centuries, the eighteenth, and the initiated few were at liberty to practise at leisure, and in security, arts which the Man of Sense held to be absurd, non-existent, and impossible.

No conceivable attitude upon the part of his dupes could have better pleased their master. Did a youth lose his inheritance at White's, or a lady her honour at Vauxhall, their protestations of having been "overlooked" were received with contemptuous shrugs. We, of a less dogmatic age, who, with an eye to the next discovery, decline to ridicule what we fail to understand, may have our suspicions, as had some of his contemporaries, of that scorer of impossible points in so many games, my Lord March.

It was an age when men, and women too, betted upon everything which could run or fight; when men, and their women also, gamed as they have begun to game again to-day; when fortunes were lost, and ancient estates exchanged hands upon the turn of a card; when sons cajoled their mothers out of their jointures, or paid fancy usury upon post-obit bonds upon the lives of fathers not yet turned fifty; when hosts rooked their guests, and guests cheated their hosts; for there was much cheating, and in the highest circles, and the play of all who won consistently was jealously scrutinised. It was an age, too, of the loosest morals. The intentions of every man of fashion were doubted, and the movements of every marriageable girl hampered with precautions.

From the dead level of this morass, towering above the heads, not only of the common herd of gamesters and bucks, of the women who came to the quinze-table with pams in their pockets, and of the bullies who would cheat an Eton boy out of his allowance, or inveigle a school-miss from the apron-string of a bribed duenna; not over these alone, but over the heads, too, of the Rigbys and Stavordales, the Selwyns and the Sandwiches of graceless memories, arose two conspicuous eminences—the King, a lonely pinnacle of domestic virtue, and the Duke of Queensberry, the most symmetrical monument of vice that England has produced for centuries.

The man's "successes" were innumerable and notorious: they were as bizarre as were his coups at play. It was as useless to warn a woman as to watch a card when "Q." was interested in either. He willed, they came to him. He willed, and the eyes of the most experienced, the most suspicious opponent were holden. He won, he was always winning; he won year in, year out, watched, suspected, but never caught.

With his sovereign he did as he chose. The men might have been supposed to be antipathetic, to have had not a taste in common; but the most vicious rake in his kingdom was Lord of the Royal Bedchamber for twenty-eight years under eleven prime ministers, influencing, by means at which we can shrewdly guess, the infected mind of a doomed king to see in him the one man necessary for the well-being of his household and the stability of his throne, who was accordingly loaded with the fattest sinecures in the Royal gift.

Such was the man who, in the maturity of his powers, in the seclusion of a half-lit room, was concentrating his every faculty to subjugate the benumbed will of an innocent girl one third his age.

To what end?—Sheer mischief belike: or shall one say 'twas the itch of an amateur to practise his art and put his

power to the test? So will your well-fed cat toy with and tease to the death the little red field-mouse which she cannot eat.

There is an ennui that drives men to seek satisfaction in a feverish repetition of what has already bored them to the verge of disgust. There is a pride so insolent that it fires at the faintest hint of opposition; a self-love so unappeasable that it must play the tyrant to a passing stranger upon the most trivial occasion; which finds no antagonist too puny, or loath, no offence too petty, inadvertent, or excusable. The Duke was weary and proud.

"Did it drop its veil at me, then?" he asked, with a Belial leer. "I have never stood that from a woman, and never will. Ye must know, madam, that the Douglas never remits. I am waited for elsewhere, and can waste but a minute upon ye, but, punished ye shall be, and your penance shall be—to kiss me! (Gad! what lips, and what a cheek!) Ay, ye sall pree ma mou, dearie—as we say on Tweed."

Still panting rebelliously, painfully, still unable to rise or to change the posture of a limb or to release her eyes, Sue listened to her own voice, speaking as from the other side of a partition, and heard the minister's questions as through curtains. Had she her card? She found Con's letter in her hand. How it had come there she knew not: she had no sense of volition, nor had consciously searched for the cover.

"Ye place this in my hands, you do. Say so again, please." The minister, bending low over her, his breath playing upon her passive face, took the memorial without a glance at its superscription. In the transference his fingers touched hers again. She shivered. Oh, what was this numbing, controlling power? (What indeed, Sue? We are still asking the question, and still the answer delays.) Was everything receding, lapsing, falling from her? Not everything. Deep within her some basal Personality stubbornly persisted, ceaselessly reiterating its "*Make haste to help me, oh God!*" (So weak women upon the rack have reiterated, unconquerably resolved, and died unconquered.)

Her face was marble, her eyes were set, but the man was conscious of a check, and knew himself defied. His temperament betrayed him. His voice, soft hitherto, if penetrating, grew harsh. 'Twas a blunder; one of those controlling cords snapped. With a supreme effort, with a wrench, with the concurrent spasms of her physical and moral nature in revolt, she uttered a muffled shriek, and flung up her gloved left hand (her right was still powerless) in some instinctive movement or repulsion or defence. It was caught; she strove to withdraw it; the unbuttoned glove slid; the ring, her wedding-

ring, slid with it. Something awoke within her : with a shriller cry and a gush of tears she was her own woman again. The nightmare cerements slipped from her limbs, the mysterious bond parted : she leapt back. The minister retained the glove ; the ring, bright and small, fell from its warm hollow and rolled upon the carpet between them.

" Pick—it—up—that ring, *that ring*, THAT RING ! So ! Now give it to me—to me ! Ye must, YE MUST ! *Now kiss me !* "

" *I—will—not !* " panted poor Sue valiantly.

The sorcerer crammed letter and glove into the pockets of a brocaded waistcoat, and stepping swiftly toward the girl, hung his jewelled hands before her eyes. The twinkling fingers dazzled her ; a great diamond shot blue stabs of light, white, red and straw-colour, white, red and—ah !—the Power was overcoming her again, she clutched the ring, her ring, in her clammy palm as a talisman, but again the circle of visible objects was contracting to a small yellow disc, in the midst of which were those baleful, unsmiling eyes. Now the fingers were still, but the voice was speaking again with an accent of confident authority.

The room was one of a series of apartments reserved for interviews with callers of distinction, to whom hours of attendance amid the crowd of inventors and place-hunters in the general anteroom would have proved irksome. Closets they were called, and were approached by a private stair and corridor, whilst communicating *en suite* by other doors in the wainscot.

This my lord duke had overlooked. A panel at the other end of the room swung inward, a voice was speaking softly. " The minister expects ye, sir. Will ye please to await him here ? " Some one entered, the panel closed.

This would never do : his grace was prompt.

" You have been misdirected, sir ; this room is engaged ; be pleased to withdraw. "

But the newcomer mutely held his ground. He was a slight, erect man, of a military bearing and alert intelligence, who was aware that he, at any rate, was in his right place.

But to the duke it was of the first necessity that this intruder should go, and go instantly, and without demur, or the spell would snap again. Queensberry, least patient of men, spoke again, and with ill-curbed asperity : he could neither intermit his experiment nor declare his rank. Hampered thus, and unable to give his full attention to either, his concentration relaxed, his eye wandered. " Be d——d to ye, fellow. Go ! "

At those strident accents the last strands parted ; Sue was free. The yellow disc expanded, she saw the man before her as he was—a shrill, gesticulating person with fiercely working features. She hated, detested, loathed him.

“ No, *don't* go, please ! Don't leave me here ! Help, oh, *help* ! ” she wailed, recoiling from her enemy like a released spring, and turning towards the intruder.

“ Silence, woman. I forbid ye to speak. Now, fellow, whoever ye are, go ! D'ye hear me ? 'Twill be the worse for ye ! ”

The intruder, keenly observant from the other end of the room, a blur against the dark panel, still made no reply. That he was vastly surprised at such a scene in a Government office goes without saying, but it would seem that here was a man over whom surprises and novel positions had not their customary paralysing effects. Possibly in other lands he had witnessed feats of eastern magic and will-control. Swiftly he made decision, swiftly acted ; lightly passing without a word to the table, he secured the carafe, filled the tumbler and dashed its contents in the face of the thaumaturgist, remarking : “ A fit, is it ?—yes, plainly a fit. Be seated, sir, 'twill pass. Permit me. . . . Ah, a convulsionary, is he ? ”

His grace stepped back spluttering curses, rubbing the water from his eyes with his left cuff, and fumbling for the cane which dangled from his right. He found it and swung it aloft, but his antagonist, cooler, readier, and more adroit, had stepped within guard, and had him by both wrists, ay, and swung him over his knee and forced his shoulders down upon the table and held him pinioned.

A contemporary, who knew his grace, has left it upon record that “ Old Q. swore like ten thousand troopers.” In the plenitude of his powers, and with such excuse, we may take it that he was not below his reputation. The room rang : the girl fled shrieking around it, seeking exit, stopping her ears, but already supplied with a legion of expletives which would inhabit an unwilling memory during life, and cast up in her dreams.

“ Hillo ! What's all this ? Who's here ? Who are ye, madam ? What make ye here ? Begone to the devil ! What ! is't you, March ? ” The minister himself, Mr. Secretary Jenkinson, was in the room, a cool, hard, laborious man, who could decide and act, but who never quarrelled : this afternoon's episode was to test to its uttermost the pliancy and temper of his metal. Closing the door upon the flight of the girl, to avoid scandal, he forced himself between the struggling men.

“ March !—Queensberry !—My Lord Duke, I say !—stop

this uproar ! Remember yourself, and me. Ye cannot fight here. Put up that sword."

With a wrench and a shudder the frantic little man got himself partially in hand, and stepped back, getting his breath and resettling his wig and ruffles.

"Painful disorders, fits, Mr. Jenkinson," chirruped Major Justin. "Another sip of water, sir? My lord, is it?" refilling the tumbler with a steady hand and offering it with a bow.

His grace took it with a hand that shook, smiling wanly, and held it to lips that twitched, his eye glittering above the rim of the glass. He was fighting himself—a losing battle. He dashed the tumbler from him—at Justin, indeed, whom it missed. The storm of shrill curses began again, again his weapon was out, and thrice he flung himself upon Jenkinson in futile efforts to break through to his enemy. The banked-up, smoky fire put out a long pale tongue of flame, which lit the dark end of the room and the frantic gestures of the duke with an infernal illumination.

"It points to blood-letting," observed Major Justin, critically observant of the symptoms, his hands behind him, imperturbably addressing the minister.

"Insolent blackguard, ye shall fight me here—*now* ! No, no, stand aside, Jenkinson. Ye mean well, I dare say, but I'll be crossed by no man alive. Don't touch me sir, or——"

"Absurd ! Pardon me a moment, Major," said the minister, taking charge of the situation with a firmer hand. "Come, March." He linked his arm in the arm of the challenger and almost forcibly withdrew him to the hearth, whence Justin, despite himself, caught fragments of murmured counsel.

"Amazing behaviour—insanity, I may surely call it. Exposure—ye don't fear ? Oh, a King's friend may do anything in reason ; but what if this gets round to George himself ? My man, here, is commanded to the Presence, he meets me by appointment, we are due at the Privy Closet. Can I present the fellow with a hole in him ? Or, what it would be more like to come to—your heart's blood on his weapon ? (—noted swordsman—his trade, ye fool !) Come, March, reason, my friend, reason ! And, a word in your ear ; we can't stand assignations in our rooms—not pass—appeal to your better self—friendship."

But the demon in possession was ill to exorcise ; the madman, acquiescent for a moment, suddenly stiffened, withdrawing his arm and turning upon his heel. "Here, you—— !" he cried.

Justin, dapper, grave, and wholly himself, was at the minister's side with suggestions.

"Still irresponsible? Tut, tut! Call in assistance? Could not prescribe or exhibit personally, but have been considered fair at phlebotomy. Lancet best, of course, but unnecessary in emergencies. Have sometimes used the point," touching his side-arm. "Should be pleased to operate now, or—later."

Mysterious is the power of the voice! Who knows not a certain pitch that catches the breath short at the tonsils and sends the blood pumping to the head? Or that other tone which, before the close of a third sentence, exasperates the nerves, not to anger, but to an intolerable weariness, so that one is fain to arise and flee? Other tones we know, buoyant, birdlike, golden, ineffable, which draw special trains to town from distant centres, keep men standing *en queue* in the slush, and are worth untold guineas per minute.

Justin's voice was sedative. The delicately veiled acceptance of consequences with which he had concluded was so cleanly non-provocative as to act as a cold sponge upon the nape of his already cooling adversary. My lord duke, somewhat late, and rather inadequately, recognised a novel force. This friend of Jenkinson's, this small, precise fire-eater, must be the self-made man, the ex-gentleman volunteer, the latest sensation from the East, of whom the drawing-rooms were buzzing, the louder that the fellow declined nine-tenths of his invitations. This surely would be the prodigy from the India House, in whom, amid the general wreck of existing military reputations, some descried a second Wolfe, or Clive.

No; this was not a man to be pistoled or pinked with impunity. Nor was this, perhaps, an especially good cause of quarrel. My lord did not want for ability; he was an extraordinarily able man indeed, who deliberately misused his parts. He found himself.

"I thank you, sir. I am already better . . . myself again, in fact . . . I conceive that I owe ye——"

Justin bowed, but Jenkinson, already drawing freer breath, broke in hastily and loudly, talking fast, anything that came. Leading his man from the room, he closed and locked the door they passed. His rattle dropped to a whisper. "No excuses—I saw what I saw. 'Tis his way,—inexplicable! The sex is wax in his hands. I anticipate it will end in trouble some day. But in my private closets!—monstrous. I'll not have it. An abuse of the *entrée*. Ye acted with extraordinary tact, sir; I commend you, envy your nerve. Wish I could congratulate you, but that would not be honest. March—the duke, I mean, never pardons opposition to his whims.

The man has a train of bullies at his beck—half-pays: ye know the sort. I am bound to warn ye; I will do what I may. Did he catch your name, I wonder?"

"I will do myself the honour of leaving my card at his grace's door," said Justin with quiet decision (and he did). But the minister cried out upon such a *bêtise*. "Don't dream for an instant that he would meet ye—in person, that is. I doubt if he would go out with *me*. Oh, brave enough; he has given his proofs, I believe; but, how put it?—he values himself—not our clay, ye understand. Let me get you out of the country, sir. Why not apply for one of our new regiments?—yes, presently, when I give ye the signal. I know his Majesty's little ways. The corps fill slowly, I own, but we might draft to hasten matters, and I really think I could promise ye the second on the roster. What say ye? 'Private affairs?'" The great man shrugged slightly at so fine an offer refused, it untied his hands; scores of well-backed men awaited his nod, would leap at the chance. "Well, well, ye shall at least give me your word, sir, to come to me if this affair involves ye in trouble."

Yes, upon the whole it would be well to keep in touch with this self-contained, unimaginative, politely inflexible piece of soldierhood, a fellow who for twenty years had been taking his risks with quiet efficiency and simple courage which made his finest work seem commonplace to the gallery and to himself—a man who had never dressed a report, who had never heard of Don Quixote, and who would have been deeply and silently offended at being likened to a knight-errant.

Justin, no fool, was aware of the value of the offer which he had waived; he bowed low and repeatedly. Now that the scene was over, and well over, he was surprised to find his cheek-bones warm. It was a dozen years since he had been so near to saying the word and doing the thing which, under the pagan ethic of the day, only blood could expiate.

But for once his grace (who had inherited the duchy in the preceding August, and was still "March" to his old friends) was better than his reputation. Left to his own reflections, he had sworn himself black in the face in frenzies of profanity, broken his cane, and burned his wig, and, then—or thus—as is the way with the passionate, had found relief; so paradoxical are the processes of psychology. When, an hour or two later, at his dressing-table, his valet showed him a letter and a glove discovered in the pockets of his master's walking suit, his grace was pleased to chuckle. Nay, he broke seal, and ran a careless eye over the humble and loyal memorial of Cornelius Boyle, late major of the 41st Foot, reciting his services and praying His Majesty's Honour-

able Secretary at War for employment in His Majesty's forces.

Having read, the duke sipped his chocolate and fell to using his toothpick. This Boyle he supposed to be the doughty little fellow who had handled him, husband of the woman possibly; he recalled something about a ring, much else was hazy (he had certainly let himself go); and presently, having cursed himself thrice for a fool and a ninny, knowing himself to be neither, fell a-musing. "The woman fought well—never knew one fight better; yet I had her beaten when the husband came on the scene. After that, begad! 'twas a case for Monsieur Mesmer himself, and his electric fluid. I must ask him what was the right practice; 'twas beyond me. But for this cursed war I'd start for Paris to-morrow. Still, I bear 'em no malice. Here's for doing a good turn to 'em—the first man and the first woman who ever stood up to me!" He pursed thin lips and, nodding, clapped his hands, and caught his valet's eye, pointing to a Sèvres standish, and taking quill, scrawled across the memorial, "*Dear Jenky, oblige my friend, and you'll oblige Yours, Q.*"

"Let that go to the War Office." He fell to pondering again. "He'll accept it as the *amende*. Your new placeman is easily appeased."

"He is, indeed, your grace," murmured the servant automatically, without understanding a word, his mind at work upon the missing wig, a lost perquisite.

Poor little Sue had fled from the building in a passion of tears, the mortifications of failure forgotten in the stress of a shocking experience and unendurable insults. She reached the Park gates just as they were closing. Her husband was awaiting her, her face told him all that he cared to know—she had failed. The brutality of his snarl came near to provoking her to resentment.

"Oh, Con, ye shouldn't have sent me. Those wicked, bad, detestable men! Oh, that wretch in the purple coat!"

"Me lor'rd juke? Ye saw him? Ye had spache wid him? Ye giv' him me letter? What said the man to ut? Quick!"

"Your—letter? Oh!" she stood exploring: she had forgotten what she had done with it during those moments of tranced subjection.

"My letter, madam!—yes, just that. For what did I send ye to him—to make love to him? *Where's your ring?*"

In the confusion of her flight the poor child had not replaced it. She dived in her pocket again, found, and timidly

set it upon her finger whilst plunging into a roundabout, breathless recital of her adventure.

Her husband listened grimly with shot-out under lip, more bull-doggish than his wont, striding eastward through the darkening streets, Sue hurrying breathlessly beside him.

"A loikely shtory! Fwhat d'ye take me, madam, that ye ixpict me to swallow ut?"

"Con!"

"Mister Tighe, *if* you please. I am Con to me frinds, and 'twould seem that yerself is not wan of thim this tide. . . . As dur'rty a trick as iver was played me by a woman. 'Tis yersilf has had the opporchunity of a lifetime, and fooled ut away. I mane ut. And, begad! I'll——" He half swung toward the shrinking girl, his brutal hands emerging from his pockets, his great chin thrown forward truculently.

They were beneath a dim, yellow hanging-lamp near Charing Cross at the moment; the street was dark, and few were afoot, for although the places of business had not closed for the day, there were no customers going or coming. So threatening was the Irishman's attitude, and so harsh his tone, that a tall, hawk-nosed young fellow in military undress who was passing shortened his stride and hesitated.

Sue's courage rose; there should be no scene.

"A dish of tea, sir, did ye say? Delightful! I am dropping." She slipped her hand through her husband's arm. The loiterer wavered, looked hard upon her and passed on.

"Tay, is ut? I'll—I'll——"

"Not here, Con, dear!"

CHAPTER V

WEDNESDAY AT DUDDINGSTONE HOUSE

WE must pay one more visit to my Lord Duddingstone, whom we left in no placable humour.

"'Fore George!" he exclaimed, discussing with Walpole the brazen behaviour of Boyle, and his prospects of recovering his lost gems, "Such impudence turns my very stomach—a rogue steals my horse and then claims my gratitude and patronage for restoring the saddle. I should dearly love to hang the rascal."

"And lose your *intagli*? Have patience, my friend. There are eighteen of your finest still at large, you say; and not one of the eighteen can be so much as shown—(shown, observe)—but ye will presently be apprised of it. Come, man, there are eighteen good reasons for preserving the equal mind in adversity. But, no snatching! Apply for warrants, and into Thames they go. Think of that plasma nereid, man, returned to her native element: a splash, a gleam, and there she will lie, deep in ooze beneath the anchors, dead cats, and the rest of it, until judgement day."

"Good heavens, Walpole, don't suggest such horrors; ye are playing upon my nerves; I swear ye are, and 'tis not friendly," blurted my lord, limping around the room in agony, his face drawn in piteously comic grimaces, for chagrin had brought upon him premonitory twinges of his gout.

This was upon the Tuesday, the day following the recovery of the less valuable stones, a recovery which whetted appetite and exasperated the pangs of loss.

How sardonically mournful are the tears of your millionaire! The wailings and pulings of a poor human creature surrounded by every single thing which gold can buy, who is clamouring for something which it will not. The present writer was once sole witness of such a scene; genuine, honest snuffles and salt drops, testimonies to the misery of an enormously wealthy personage deprived of the one small thing upon which he had set his little heart. Parks and country seats he possessed,

broad acres by the thousand in this county and in that, many an acre beside of house-roofs let to excellent tenants, and stocks and shares beyond estimation. Good health, too, was his portion, a loving wife, dutiful children and faithful servants. The man's position and lot in life were ideal, methought; I think so still. He had everything: but it was not enough. There was a fly in the ointment that he loved, nor could a thousand uncontaminated gallipots appease him, nor smooth his rumpled locks. There was yet one ripe, red apple high overhead, and all the loaded shelves in his fruit-houses were unable to slake his thirst. Rather, let us say, the top brick was still upon the chimney of his ambition, nor could he by any means come by that top brick. How the man had striven and clambered! With what dexterous combinations of ropes and kites and ladders had he essayed! In vain, there was the brick, and there was he, and never in this life, as he at length recognised, was that dirty, sooty trophy to be his. So he wept in my presence, precisely with the snubs and heavings of the child sorrowing over his broken toy. Dollies upon dollies, and tin soldiers upon tin soldiers lay around him, but, no; their smiles and gorgeous regimentals were nothing to him; he wailed to have restored to him the hopelessly-damaged object of his affections whose vital sawdust strewn the nursery floor.

There were moments when my Lord Duddingstone approached this nadir of manhood, hours in which he recognised the insufficiency and essential trashiness of his marbles, his coins, and his old masters, whilst feeling (alas!) the indispensability of those eighteen lost antiques. He fidgeted, he fretted with almost uncontrollable impatience; he also swore, for in those days gentlemen did swear.

Take patience, my lord Viscount, bear the crushing burden of your calamity for one more day; nay, for half a day; nay, for an hour,—for less! Your street bell clangs, this Wednesday forenoon, callers of quality are in the house.

“My lord, Major Justin and Mr. Repton.”

“Major, I profess I am delighted to see ye beneath my roof. You have done well to call upon me, sir; I am honoured, sir; regard me as your servant, sir. Will ye be seated?”

The Major bowed and bowed again, whilst Lord Duddingstone, limping about the room, one foot in a pantoufle and its fellow in the shoe which was then known as a “channel pump,” ran on.

“Ye deserve well of the Company, Major—better than ye know, even. Our position grows stronger daily; 'tis not possible now for the ministry to disavow us. There was a ticklish week, but your most timely arrival—and your ex-

planations—yes, yes. The Honourable Court is under obligations to ye, sir. My colleagues upon the Committee of Foreign Relations remarked upon ye one and all; yes, one and all. It shall be my pleasure,—But, heh? What the deuce am I doing? Sit, my dear sir, sit! And your friend here; I profess I had not observed his presence. My eyes are but little use to me on dark days, and all days at this season are dark days in Town. I can do nothing without glasses”—he began fumbling—“ruined ’em first with the small-pox at Eton, and later with small work in Italy, deciphering coins, and what not. Now, where the mischief are those glasses?” He rang a handbell passionately, and was answered by a servant bearing four or five pairs of glasses upon a velvet tray, which his lordship petulantly examined and wiped before bestowing in separate pockets. My lord would never wear spectacles, nor attach to himself in any manner the glasses which he used; and in consequence, being the most unmethodical and impatient of men, was for ever mislaying them. “Serve wine!” he cried after the man had closed the door behind him.

“Your friend, Major—your friend, I was saying,” he resumed, peering about the room through a pair of powerful lenses used for reading pica, and dashing them from his nose in disgust to replace them with a pair adapted for general use. “Your friend, sir—present me, I beg—Mr. Repton, your servant, sir, be seated, gentlemen.” Then, observing that whilst the Major had taken one of the chairs indicated, his companion, a handsome youth of twenty, remained standing beside his, “Use no ceremony, young sir,” waving a small white hand, “any friend of Major Justin——” The youth still hesitated, the Major intervened.

“With your good leave, my lord, my friend here, whose business is with yourself, will stand until ye have heard what he has come to say.”

“Ho, some request?—a proper consideration, and to be commended in the young. Sir, ye have my leave to speak.”

“My lord,” began the youth with obvious tremors, “I have reason to believe that these are yours.” Whilst speaking he advanced and placed in his host’s hands a small box such as gunsmiths use for pistol flints.

“Hey?—what?—mine, d’ye say?—and how?” picking at the lid, “Hey day?” The keen, short-sighted, gray eyes twinkled beneath twitching brows, the clean-shaven pink face deepened its flesh-tints, “*Mine!* undoubtedly they are mine. Nine, twelve, fifteen, *eighteen*. Yes, the full tale, complete again!” He hugged the box to his breast and stood back, drawing shortened breaths. “Mine, indeed!

But, where?—come, come, this beggars belief. It—it—it beats bull-baiting. Ho, ho!” he laughed like a boy. “I am mightily beholden to ye, Mr. Repton; ’tis amazing, ’tis astounding! How, my dear sir, in Heaven’s name, came ye by my stolen *intagli*?”

The youth, painfully constrained, moistened dry lips. The Viscount, oblivious of everything save the joys of recovered possession, chuckled over his toys with watering eyes.

“All here, every single stone, as I am a living sinner; even the nereid plasma, the incomparable Isagoras, which I got wind of at Taranto and hunted down at Brindisi. Yes, and the signed Koinos that Mann came near to quarrelling with me over. Yes, and my Bearded Bacchos in sardonyx, inscribed with the name of Pyrgoteles, my great Pæstum *trouvaille*. All here again! Ho! ho! My cabinet is reinstated once more. I can look Walpole in the face. But, young man, young man, I say, where upon earth, or under it, got ye these? Speak, my dear sir, speak! Major Justin, what ails your friend?”

The Major had risen, was moving to the side of his companion, had laid a sympathetic hand upon his shoulder, a fatherly hand.

“I will beg of you to afford us a moment’s grace, my lord. We have something to tell you, which—— Come, Repton.”

The host, observing that his guests were standing, arose, still flushed and panting with excitement. He had returned his treasures to the box, and, holding them clasped to his breast between both hands, peered curiously at his visitors.

“My lord,” began the youth huskily, “you lost those gems two months and more ago.”

“Lost?” echoed the Viscount. “I was robbed of them, of these and forty-three others, forty-three antiques of less merit but of equal authenticity; not one doubtful *cameo*, not a forged *intaglio* among them. I would scout such a trifle from my cabinet. Yes, sixty-one Greek gems of the best period, some incomparably fine, a collection unequalled in Europe, save that at the Vatican, of course, and—er—possibly the Grand Ducal cabinet at Florence. Lost? Robbed, I repeat—*robbed*—I was, and by a scurvy fellow, a dependant, my chaplain, the son of a person in my service, whom I have educated, and befriended, and proposed to advance; a monster of ingratitude, diabolical. Oh, a heart-breaking business! Think what it has meant to us. I say nothing of the loss, the deprivation, the blank in my life—you would not understand—only a scholar knows. But consider the disappointment, the suspense, the offence given to trusted domestics (it has gone near to break up my household; my

valet will never be the man again; my butler has fallen into a despondency, and drinks). Cruel! But, ye were saying?"

"My lord, these and some others, possibly the whole of your collections—for there were over three score of them—fell into my hands at one time——"

"Ho!—yes—yes. But, how?——"

"My lord, I see that I must either begin with a confession or end with it. You will observe that I have declined your gracious permission to sit in your presence, a permission extended before ye knew to whom ye granted it."

"Sir, Major Justin's friendship——"

"Companionship, or rather patronage, my lord," corrected the youth hastily, and in a low voice, with a swift glance of respectful gratitude at his benefactor. "It is not—there cannot be—friendship between such a man as Major Justin and myself—as yet. It is my prayer that there may be—at some future time. But let me get to my confession. I—I was a common thief." His chin sunk upon his breast, his eyes closed tightly as if to shut out the scorch of an unendurable shame.

"Good God!" exclaimed the Viscount.

"A highwayman, rather, my lord," corrected the Major.

"Eh? Ye don't say so!—that is better; but bad, very bad. But what——?" for the lad had come to a stop and stood with hanging head, a figure of mortification.

"My lord, I will tell you all—in time; but it is hard, most hard. I was a gentleman—once. I heard of your loss. I—how shall I say?—I surmised in whose hands those things would be, and where—and, so I—reclaimed them," he concluded lamely.

"From the real thief?" asked his lordship keenly.

"From the original thief, my lord. I was little better. He robbed you. I robbed him."

"Ay, ay, but intention counts—is everything, indeed. Your motive was noble, you proposed to yourself to restore——"

"Not at first; no, my motive was unworthy. I had designs upon your family, upon yourself, upon your purse, my lord (which I need not go into, since I have laid them aside)."

"Highly, tightly, the deuce ye have! I am beholden to ye, young man!—And I mean it," he added in a more cordial tone, still clasping the box. "Come, this gets beyond me. You, yourself, as it seems to me, know but the half of your tale; but I must have that half first. From whom had ye my gems—things of which it is impossible to suppose ye knew the value. Oh, ye *did* know it?"

"My lord, as I said, I was a gentleman once."

"Where got ye your schooling? Shrewsbury? Oho, then 'tis possible ye know one Baskett, a man of about your years?"

The youth reddened silently.

"We will let that pass," said his lordship. "I had a reason—but, tell your story your own way. But, these, as ye say, were but a third part of your original booty (pardon the word). Is it permitted to ask what has become of the rest?"

"I was robbed of them in turn."

"What?—not by an Irish adventurer, by any chance?—not by an extraordinary great red-haired person, calling himself sometimes Tighe and at others Boyle?"

"The same, my lord. I do not blame him, I waylaid the man. I took him, as I supposed, at a disadvantage, but he had the better of me, I know not how. Yes, that must be the man."

"Then I am beholden to you again, young sir, for I have done that person an injustice (he had himself to thank for the ill impression he made, but that by the way). He was in this room no later than last Monday. He brought me the stones of which he deprived ye with a cock-and-bull story of how he came by them, one half of it false and the rest little to his credit. He was mixed up with my old servant Baskett; my agents had been watching his movements for weeks, and he, as it seems, watching the *News* for an increase in the reward. I thought him a rogue in grain, yet, as now appears, he had an honest streak in him, and it shall be my pleasure to recognise his services such as they have been."

The little man paced the width of his carpet proudly whilst speaking, nodding his bewigged head with decision; he was a personage who expected a good deal from the world in which he moved, and was prepared to repay good offices liberally. On the other hand, he held himself bound by his position to follow derelictions with pertinacious and effective displeasure.

"And, this other, this Baskett? (you see I have his name)," resumed his lordship reverting.

"My lord, must I refer to him? He is a paltry fellow; frankly, I think him beneath your vengeance. I could indeed tell ye but little more than ye know, if as much indeed; for I have clean lost touch with him, and know not where he may be, north or south, or where——"

"Pass him," cried his lordship with impatience, for, like all men of his rank, he was used to an implicit obedience from inferiors. "We have reached to this then, we have ye robbed by this Irishman and left for dead by the roadside. (I had all that from Tighe, or Boyle, and disbelieved every single word of it.) What next befell ye? Who succoured ye? What brought ye to a better frame?"

"My more than father, my lord, my benefactor, Major

Justin. He found me in my blood, he saw signs of life in me, he found shelter for me, and nursed me back to strength. Nor is this the half of what I owe to him. He bade me lay aside my evil thought of revenge; he urged me to reform my life, and to set myself to make restoration of my robberies. All is due to him, my lord."

Whilst speaking, the youth had warmed and had forgotten himself in his theme, the shame with which he had owned to his misdeeds had tied his tongue, but in praise of his benefactor he had let himself go and had spoken hot from the heart.

"A handsome lad," thought his lordship, and sighed, remembering that degenerate son of his. "A pretty fellow, well-mannered, well-made, and with parts. There's blood in him or I'm strangely mistaken. Some gentleman's by-blow, more's the pity; for what can one make of a bastard?—and after such a misdeal? Yet I certainly owe him a fresh start.

"Young man," he said aloud, "there's a point that puzzles me yet. When ye lost the greater part of these how came ye to retain all the best? What was the inducement to specially secrete these eighteen?"

"They are inscribed, my lord. I sorted them out for the pleasure I took in deciphering them; that is all."

"A scholar; and from a grammar school? Oho! Will ye be pleased to read me that?" drawing from one of his many pockets a small bronze plaque pierced and lettered rudely. Repton received it with a bow and turned it in his hand. "Latin," said he. "'Tene me.' Ah, it would run thus, I should say: '*Hold me fast, nor let me make off. Restore me to my owner Enobarbus on the estate of Quintilianus.*' What might this have been used for, my lord?—a plate from a dog-strap? It seems large."

"An excellent guess; 'twas a slave-badge, sir. Our ladies would put as much upon their black boys' collars to-day, if the common people could read, or there were anywhere for the poor wretches to run to. Come, you construe your Latin at sight; but what make ye of these?" He placed a couple of small stones in his guest's hand, minutely engraved. The youth carried them to the nearest window.

"A Leda and swan, my lord, signed *Mandronax*, whatever that may signify; and this Aphrodite Epitragia has the word *Hermaiskos* for its poesy." He returned the gems to their owner with a bow: my lord took snuff with enthusiasm.

"Your man is a classic indeed, Major. I had these things from Corcyra—Corfu, I would say—but yesterday, and he reads 'em off like a hornbook. Stay, I'll put ye to one more test, and 'tis hardly a fair one, for few of our youngsters now-

adays could pass it; but since ye are plainly well-grounded in the humanities, we'll put ye on in the science of gentlemen. Discuss me this, sir."

"A thumb-ring, my lord, an abbot's, as I judge, for there is no mitre. Yes, he bears the arms of some foreign monastery impaling those of his house."

"Why not English?" asked the virtuoso keenly.

"By the blazon, my lord, these hands in religion are a Norman charge, the name escapes me for the moment; nor could it be the bearing of an English branch (there is an English branch, it is the Marriage coat, it has come to me); for this badge of cadency, this bordure, is either French or Scottish."

"Excellent," chirruped their host, beaming upon the youngster with just the appreciative delight with which a huntsman watches a young entry make good the line across a sheepfold. "Major Justin, your *protégé*—Your pardon, sir! Yes, what is it?" this to a servant who had entered silently, his manner betraying a reserved discomposure. At a murmured name, which was plainly not intended for the callers, and which did not reach them, their host stiffened.

"In Town? *Here*? I will not receive him. Bid him begone. Bid him rejoin, as from me, ye understand?" he said sternly, and, as the man retired, would have resumed the interrupted thread of his discourse, but again the door opened, and an elder man appeared with the same veiled anxiety upon his face. Lord Duddingstone, reddening with emotion, dashed his glasses from his nose, set down upon the table the flint-box which he was in the act of reopening, and hastily excusing himself, preceded the servant from the room.

Scarce had the door closed behind him when another, concealed by dummy book-backs, flew wide, and in reeled a big loutish youth dressed in the height of the fashion, who exclaimed as he came:

"'Won't see me,' be hanged, for here I am, sir." He checked at sight of the empty chair; the display of wealth upon the table took his eye; he chuckled tipsily. His back as he entered had been towards Justin and Repton, who were standing as they had arisen when their host left them. In another moment one or the other would have given some signal of his presence, but there simply was not time: what followed was done in a trice.

"My luck!" whispered the intruder, his eyes upon the cloth upon which my lord at his going had set down a magnificent jewel, an Eros entrapped, cut in red and white sardonyx mounted in goldsmith's work of renaissance taste. There was a quick, light pounce, and the cameo was gone. Justin

was so placed as to miss the significance of the movement : it was Repton who acted ; his left took the thief by the collar, his right caught the larcenous hand by its wrist and held it confined within its fob.

“ Ug—Gug ! What the— ? Who the— ? Tr—*Travis* ! ”

The name escaped the speaker’s lips just as the door reopened, admitting Lord Duddingstone. His lordship closed it behind him, set his back to it, and stood surveying the scene.

“ Fred ! ” he exclaimed bitterly and paused, still ignorant of the worst. “ Heh, what ? ” he cried, advancing, for Repton, aware of his coming, involuntarily relaxed his grip, whilst his captive, stung to desperation, redoubled his efforts ; the imprisoned hand achieved freedom, but, in the act of escaping from the fob, dropped its booty. The pilfered cameo fell, and in falling rolled to the feet of its rightful owner.

Stooping with surprising agility considering his infirmities, Lord Duddingstone caught it from the carpet and, arising, turned upon the thief a face congested with anger and exertion.

“ *Again* ! ” he panted. The word was as bitter as a curse.

“ ’Twas a joke, no more. I swear, sir ! But of course you won’t believe me,” wailed the Honourable Frederick Scrivener, sobered by this inopportune climax of discovery, and bending before his angry father with an abject inclination of body and protesting hands ; then, finding no sign of forgiveness, he abandoned himself to a passion of jealous fury.

“ Damme ! say what ye choose,” he stamped. “ Do what ye will ! I hate you, sir ! ’Tis all your fault ! Yes, yours, *yours* ! Ye never have given me fair play, or used me as a father. First ye send me up ; next ye fetch me down ; then ye pack me off to mess with a d—d set of dirty hawbucks, and now, when I ask for the favour of a word with you, ye deny me your presence, refuse me house-room, bar me out. This house is as much mine as yours, and may be all mine by to-morrow ; yet ye fill it with spies ; yes, ye bring in a low beast, this Travis fellow, to backbite me in my absence.”

The man had run himself out of breath. Justin’s eyes widened, the Viscount peered blindly, fumbling for his glasses in pocket after pocket. Both turned upon Repton, who fell back a step.

The Honourable Frederick saw and misinterpreted the movement.

“ There, look at him ! I knew it ! I heard that he was in the house and forced myself into your presence, sir, to out-face him. Ye don’t know him, sir ; ye don’t indeed ! ”

“ And that I take to be your first true word,” interposed the Viscount dryly. “ And now, sir,” turning to Repton, “ who may you be ? *Travis*, he has called you.”

"Travis is my name, my lord, Draycott Sigismund Travis; yes, late a servitor of Christ Church."

Justin's face flamed, unobserved by the others, who were too absorbed in their own concerns to notice the silent little man in his corner, whose heart was beating joyously within him.

"Mr. Travis of Christ Church, Oxford!" cried Lord Duddingstone incredulously, the form of his countenance changing. "Is't possible?—but 'tis amazing! The missing piece of the puzzle, the key to the cipher, begad! Sir, allow me to tender you my sincere commiseration. I know your story, the unmerited humiliations brought upon you by this ill-conditioned whelp here. Yes, by you, sir!" with a scathing side-glance at the Honourable Frederick, who stood shifting himself from one foot to its fellow, picking at the lace upon his cuff. "But, apologies are poor stuff if they stand alone; I purposed reinstatement when I first heard of that Oxford business, and did what I could to get the dons to reconsider your case. 'Twas your going down so precipitately which balked me. And now I fear that door is closed." He stopped, finding himself upon the edge of revelations which were not for the ear of his son. "After all, honour comes first. Ye sent your cartel once to this poltroon of mine; he got his tutor to take it up, eh? And now, after what has passed but a minute since ye judge him unworthy of your sword, eh? But sit ye down here and write your challenge again, and ye shall see him eat it."

"Oh, sir, for pity's sake," whined the Honourable Frederick, bursting into tears.

"Sir!—my lord!" stammered Travis, "I am in your hands and Major Justin's, but, of my own motion, I'd not pursue my quarrel farther."

"Naturally ye would refuse to fight a thief!"

"We are all sinners, my lord," said the youth, with a meaning look and in a shaken voice, the colour mounting to his brow, but meeting his host's eye steadily. Both men stopped speaking. Travis resumed:

"I have vowed my life to my king, my lord."

"You are right," interrupted the Viscount impetuously. "Command my influence, young sir; you, at least, will do me credit. Whilst as for you—" he wheeled upon the unworthy inheritor of his name, who, divining that the wrath that boded ill for his personal comfort was past, had recovered his jaunty carriage and was surprised in the act of taking snuff.

"As for me, sir? I beg ye will not concern yourself: ye cannot set aside the entail."

"But I can and will cut ye out of the personalty. . . . Begone!"

“And I can and will give post-obits,” riposted the scapegrace, snapping to the lid of his snuff-box and retreating with undignified haste.

His father kicked to the door behind him, and after a momentary struggle for self-mastery rang for wine.

During this painful personal interlude neither Lord Duddingstone nor the young fellow, who, having entered the house as Repton, had since confessed to another name, had given a thought to Justin. The Major, never careful to hold the centre of the stage, had kept in the background. His *protégé* now turned at the gentle pressure of a hand upon his arm and found himself confronted by an illumined countenance; little kindly ellipses framed the angles of an astonished mouth; twitching crowsfeet puckered the corners of incredulous eyes, eyes that shone and sparkled for all the intensity of their scrutiny.

“My lord, pardon me, I beg!” cried the Major, low and with a sort of breathless haste in his tone, turning to his host, but still retaining his hold, as though he feared that his newly found ward might elude him. “Repton?”—he swung round again and faced his man—“What does this mean?—Did I catch?—Did I hear?—*Travis* ye call yourself—and the Christian names *Draycott* and *Sigismund*? Then it must be! A coincidence is impossible, ’tis millions to one. Who was your father, Rep—*Travis*, I mean?—Yes, yes! And your mother? Then it is—*you are the boy!*”

The youth, having replied to his friend’s questions, stood in silent embarrassment, awaiting he knew not what of news from a father of whom he had never heard good nor bad, but whose character, by reason of this unnatural reticence, he suspected had been flawed.

His lordship, perceiving that for the moment his presence was forgotten, and his cabinet the scene of a crescendo movement of recognitions and *éclaircissements*, behaved as a gentleman should. Intercepting the entrance of the servant, he served the Major with wine with his own hands, and, turning a discreet back, examined one of his newly recovered *intagli* with a watchmaker’s eye-piece whilst his guests rearranged their mutual relationships.

“But I have sought ye half over England, my boy. Did ye never see my notices and rewards in the *News*? Did no one ever tell ye? My lord, this young gentleman turns out to be the son of one of my oldest friends. His mother, of whom I can scarce trust myself to speak, I knew before her marriage. His father and I served in the old Thirty-ninth for a score of years. Both are dead, Colonel Travis upon the day on which I sailed, seven months since, and after

charging me to assist his children. Your sister, Travis? Ye have a sister, my lad, Baby Sue. I remember her well. Where is she? At Chester with your aunt? To think of it! And but t'other day we were within a few miles of her. . . . And neither of us understood. Well, well! We must ride north again. She knows nothing of—this? Naturally; but ye can look her in the face now. But in the meantime,” turning to Lord Duddingstone, who was finding the pursuit of archæology difficult under the circumstances, and was growingly interested in his guests, “My lord, I should explain——”

“As ye will, Major; but first let me fill your glass. Help yourself, Mr. Travis. I am still somewhat in the dark, but none the less delighted. It looks as though we had both been hunting our young friend here upon different lines, and had run into him simultaneously. Ye may think yourself lucky, youngster, for this gentleman and myself—(Between you and me, Major, 'twill go hard but we make a man of him yet. My interest, of course, I place, but I have already said that.) Is there—er—much that needs setting—er—right? If—er—(pardon the suggestion) means are needed, ye have only——”

“My lord, I thank ye—he thanks ye; but Mr. Travis is amply——”

“’Tis unknown to me, then,” gasped the poor lad blankly, feeling his head begin to turn.

“As a loan between gentlemen,” urged his lordship, unwilling to be baulked. The youth dropped upon his knee, caught his host’s hand and, having carried it to his lips, sought the darkest corner of the room in which to master his emotions.

“La, la,” muttered his lordship, extending his box to Justin, “He will do, this one. Ill-usage would have made a devil of him, but you and I, Major, you and I, eh?”

CHAPTER VI

FRIDAY AT THE WAR OFFICE. BOYLE GETS HIS CHANCE

THE Irishman lay late after his Wednesday night's bout, but by Thursday noon had his head in a tub and was calling for small beer and steak. Sue glanced fearfully at her master's congested, determined face, and trembled; some new impulse was moving him in which she had no part. For the first time since she had known him he was slovenly in his dress; unshorn, unpowdered, loose at the wrists and throat; he sate at his food, forcing it down, with no word for her; then, bidding her be off with the tray, he fell to taking stock of their possessions.

Hers were touched and tossed aside as inadequate; there was no money in the little hoard of childish presents. Her christening mug and a silver spoon, both of Eastern make, he weighed in his hand and gloomed upon—'twas too pitiful a spoil; he put them back for second, and possibly worse thoughts.

To his own belongings. A French repeater with fob-riband and heavy seal was roughly appraised and repouched: he could not part with it, 'twas a part of himself. A case, which Sue saw opened for the first time, contained his service sword, a bright, notched blade, upon which she looked with a tightened throat. Her husband frowned upon it: it should be the last thing to go.

His pistols, then, a pair of wonderful weapons of an exquisite workmanship and finish; again no; he could not part with them. Shutting an eye, he toised a chimney-pot through the grimy pane; dandled the darlings, wiping imaginary specks of dust from the satin sheen of blue barrels, and, muttering, returned them to their box.

His books came next under review: no extensive library, as you may guess, but enough to have opened Sue's eyes: was not his real name upon their flyleaves? There was *The Compleat Gamester*, printed for J. Hodges of London, *being the Gentleman's Guide to the Play of Whist, Ombre, and Quadrille*.

Next came a 1772 *Hoyle*, the Dublin edition; and the Edinburgh issue of Sir W. Hope's *Vindication of the True Art of Self-Defence* with his *Proposals to the Hon'ble Members of Parliament for erecting a Court of Honour in Great Britain*, a really fine work with plates, and in fair condition, although fifty years old. The three volumes, and a song-book, which he hastily closed, would bring but a few shillings; these too, each and all, were essentials: he would not know himself without a few such-like trifles. Yes, money he must have. Back went his thoughts to his pistols, his most valuable possessions. These might fetch a good round sum if suitably placed upon the market; but time was needed, nor did he know his London; and finally, where should he replace them when his luck should turn? Something must go. The words recurred with the steady throbbing of an aching head. He sat very still with empty hands for a matter of five minutes, watched in silence by his patient bride, unconscious of fault, but hungering for reconciliation. He did not turn his eyes to her once; he had not kissed her since his waking. At the beginning of his brown-study, he loved her and hated himself, at its end he loved himself and half hated her. He had given place to the devil. Sue should go.

The man was at one of the many crises of a feverish life. He saw that his ace was trumped. No further hope of help from Lord Duddingstone remained to him: nor, if his lordship should choose to exert his influence, was employment to be hoped for at either the War Office or the India House.

"If he speaks he blocks me. I'll speak fir'st," he said, breaking a silence which had lasted an hour, and set himself to make an elaborate toilet. The money was gone, but his clothes were still presentable. He would play his appearance, his undeniable service record, and his matchless effrontery for all they might be worth to His Majesty's Secretary of State at War; yes, and would play them next day, forestalling a possible embargo by his enemy. Sue had failed him, he would try a last throw with his own hand. So Thursday passed in preparations.

The doors of the inner office opened at last. The latest left of the waiters for interviews arose and uncovered, moistening dry lips and smiling wistfully with some faint hope of catching, if they might, the eye of the minister ere he left for the day.

Mr. Jenkinson, who had succeeded Lord Barrington a month before, looked neither to right nor left as he sauntered forth, hat on head and cane beneath his arm, attending to the set of

his ruffles ; the privileged caller, who had wasted his afternoon and disappointed the hopes of twenty worthier men, strolled beside him, chatting glibly of far-distant horrors, as stay-at-home warriors are accustomed to do in war-time.

"Better news these, from Clinton, eh ? 'Tis the Susquehannah *coup* over again. Our Loyalists and their savages know their business, eh ? "

"What, the Cherry Valley burnings ? I swear I am mortally sick of the thing. A cruel piece of—what ? 'Only carrying out the Declaration ? ' Suffolk is a fool and Johnstone something worse (if there be anything worse than a fool, which I doubt). His tampering with their man Reed has done the King's affairs all the harm in the world. I profess I am not squeamish, but these 'extremes of war'—pah ! See what a handle they have given to Coke and Rockingham—Burke too."

The careless, high-pitched voices flattened as the men descended the wide stair. Boyle understood nothing : he was not attending ; he stood biting his lip in chagrin at another day wasted. Not the Poets' Poet himself was more keenly sensible of What hell it is in suing long to bide. "Twenty years have I sur'v'd the Black Cockade—more shame to me father's son !—and at the last to foind mesilf tipped over the tail of the yoke and left on the road ! An' mesilf a full major, with me campeens and hurts to show for ut ! Faith, 'tis not so aisy for a poor man to be crossing the Channel in war-time, or, for all they tell us of his uncle's treatment of poor Lally, I'd be thrying if King Louis were not the better paymaster."

After the interval demanded by etiquette, he descended with the rest. A sentry blocked the portal, Mr. Secretary still loitered, the chairs of himself and his friends stopped the way. While demigods exchange parting pinches, the commonalty keeps its distance. Boyle, fretting inwardly, his stomach calling for food, must halt, hat in hand, until the way should be clear.

The minister and his friend, now joined by a third grandee, gesticulated spacioously at their ease without thought for the inconvenience of lesser mortals. 'Twas hounds now, a match to be run from the Rubbing-House in Newmarket town to the starting-post of the Beacon Course, between a couple of Mr. Meynell's pack and a couple of Mr. Barry's, for five hundred pounds.

"Meynell is training upon legs of mutton, I hear," said the minister, breaking the seal of a letter placed in his hands a moment before by a messenger who was still in view crossing the courtyard. Boyle idly watched the man's back and thought he had seen his liveries somewhere lately.

"That is Old Dud's man for a guinea," wagered a demigod, dropping glass from eye and swinging his cane by its tassel.

"Two to five I name the business," said the third.

"Pooh, ye saw us bidding," laughed the minister, running an eye over the letter. "But ye'd have lost, for 'tis nothing to do with the Dutch enamels. This old hunk solicits my good offices for a client of his : one Boyle. Now, where have I seen the name ? On some minute of Barrington's was it ? Or wasn't it, March ? Who is this Boyle ? An Irishman if I read this aright (he writes ill enough in all conscience), an army man who has suffered a set-back. Now, where on earth ?" The speaker held a pinch between finger and thumb in suspense, whilst glancing to left and right for a suggestion in aid of memory. His back was toward the hungry group in the porch.

"I am here, sir—your pardon ; but I thought I heard ye call me. Boyle, late of the Forty-first." The Major passed the sentry, advanced a couple of steps, and halted saluting.

It is possible to be too opportune. The man's precipitancy came near to crossing his business. The minister, unused to self-introductions conducted with such absence of formality, stiffened frigidly, quizzing his man in an unpromising silence : even when the glass was lowered, the poise of the head, no less than the curves of brow and lip, denoted a certain repugnance, curbed by something, possibly recollections of the writer of the letter still held between his fingers.

"In-deed ? And are you the Mr. Boyle of whom my friend—— ? By the by, are ye personally acquainted with Lord Duddingstone ?"

Boyle claimed the acquaintance with frank heartiness. "I was at Duddingstone House within the week, sir ; beyond a touch of the gout, his lordship was in his usual health."

"'Tis the excuse he makes for his penmanship," laughed the minister, half disarmed by this clever parry. He and Duddingstone were rival collectors. The ownership of a pair of cloisonné vases, which had reached London from Tokyo by way of Amsterdam, was in dispute between them : Jenkinson still hoped to be obliged. He turned to his waiting friends, "An affair of a couple of minutes ; wait, if you will ; or expect me later at Arthur's," then, turning to Boyle, "Will you be pleased to follow me ?" he reascended the stair.

The interview was of the shortest. "Have ye any papers ?—so," running over Boyle's commission. "Sir, if I recall the circumstance, it has been touch-and-go with you. But your patron thinks well of ye. You served in the Virginias ?"

"And at New York, sir ; I was woundud at the affair of

Long Island, and again at Haarlem Heights, and a thir'd time at the taking of Fort Washington, and——"

"Yes, yes; but it was not wounds which brought ye home, sir, as I read this——" tapping a paper laid before him by a secretary. The minister recognised the gravity of the record, his visage darkened. The clerk turned the page.

"What, more?" he read on and sate in stillness for a few moments, realising the unfitness of this postulant for service.

"Sir, I did wrong to bid ye to this room. As for my Lord Duddingstone, I must suppose that he knows ye but slightly. I fear there is nothing——" He stripped the feather from a quill. Boyle, but now buoyant upon a rising billow of hope, sickened in the descent.

The minister drew his feet beneath him and cleared his throat to give dismissal, but the clerk submitted yet another paper.

"Still more? Ah! How came this?—and when? An hour or so since? And why was it kept from me?"

The clerk murmured excuses. Boyle, with amazement, recognised his own memorial, the copy lost by Sue.

The minister did not so much as glance at it, reserving a hesitant displeasure for a scrawled endorsement which he seemed at once to resent and bow to. The quill fared badly at his hands; then, with a clearing brow and a hard smile:

"Sir, my lord duke is pleased to interest himself in you. I can only say ye are happy in your friends" (a touch of malice here). He seemed to relent, but hesitated still, watched mutely by Boyle, who was now blessing Sue in his heart.

"It would appear that ye are a person with a genius for locking the door by which ye wish to enter. America is closed to ye. But it is just upon the cards that I have a billet——" he turned to the clerk. "When do they say St. John can travel?"

"Sir, he died in St. Thomas's Hospital this afternoon," replied the man. The minister, without remarking upon the news, turned to Boyle.

"Could ye start to-morrow? Are ye without encumbrance?"

"I am, my lor'd! and at your honour's commands this minute!" cried Boyle the prompt, the spirit of the gamester with a winning hand shining in his hazel eyes. ("By God, I am a made man, this day!" he was saying to himself, and knew not that sentence had gone forth against him for that moment's perfidy, nor heard the departing wings of his good angel.)

"Ha, ye can? Then we will gazette ye to the vacant majority in His Majesty's 10th Hanoverians—Hardenberg's,

I believe the fellows prefer to call themselves—a singularly troublesome corps in my judgement, but that is by the way, and your own unfortunate experiences will aid ye in keeping them in order. They are quartered at Gibraltar. Ye may thank a hackney coachman for this chance. Your predecessor-designate was knocked down on London Bridge no later than yesterday, and I am but just apprised of his death. *His predecessor fell in a duel, sir.*” The speaker’s eye was severe; Boyle, who had fancied him a fribble, saw his mistake. Jenkinson was a shrewd, painstaking man of business, whose foible it was to pass as a person of pleasure; he would be Lord Hawkesbury eight years later, and die Lord Liverpool, full of years and honours, the latter more honestly earned than were most of the titles and pensions enjoyed by the servants of King George the Deplorable.

“Yes, sir,” continued the minister, after a scrutinising pause, “here is your last chance. The exigencies of His Majesty’s service, the malice of these colonials, a poke with a small-sword, and the ill-driving of a drunken jarvey have set ye upon your feet again. Here”—he scrawled his name with a spluttering quill, the clerk shook sand upon the blots—“here is your commission duly endorsed. Major St. John’s cabin—yours now—is taken upon the transport, *Mary of Something-or-other*, lying somewhere in the pool, under orders to take to-morrow’s tide. Ye will find details on board from the Tower and Knightsbridge, which ye will hand over to the Commandant of Pendennis Castle, placing your services at his disposal in getting what polish ye can upon the drafts for the Rock garrison. A convoy for the Mediterranean will rendezvous at Falmouth sooner or later (my colleague of the navy will see to that), and ye will take your passage out then. Commend me to the Duke and to Lord Duddingstone, sir; and I have the honour to wish ye a good-day.”

CHAPTER VII

SATURDAY IN THE PARK ; SUE'S ANGEL INTERVENES

THE girl sate dejectedly upon the seat, the same which she had shared with her husband on the previous Tuesday. Here she had sate by his side for the last time, here for the last time he had shown her some small kindness. It had been a mild winter's sunset then—there was rime upon the grass to-day, the first of the eighty-four days' frost which ushered in that disastrous year. Her shoes were worn and thin, she had eaten nothing since her breakfast, she was lonely, low-spirited, hungry, and cold ; weary, too, for she had tramped the streets since her landlady had shewn her to the door.

Con was missing. She had awakened in the dark of a winter's morning to find his side of the bed empty and cold. He had not returned to breakfast. Her anxieties had grown as the forenoon had worn on ; still she had not suspected the worst until her landlady, after an unauthorised examination of her lodger's belongings, had descended upon her with peremptory demands for a settlement of her bill. Sue had from the first surrendered to her husband the custody of the common purse. He was not to be found, and had taken with him, as her creditor had already assured herself, every article of value which he possessed.

"I'd hegspected as much," averred the woman, "but 'e 'ave done me brown. Fobbed me off with fine words for three weeks, but never showed me the colour of his money. There's a cord lyink in the area what 'e let 'is stuff out o' winder by. I seen 'im leave early, and looked the man over careful-like. Never crost me mind to look outside round the corner in John Street. Yes, 'e's bunged the lydy on me like a dud shillin'. That's the sort 'e is. So, hout ye gits, madam !"

Sue had gone forth almost as she stood, the woman, with an afterthought of pity, allowing her her cloak.

Some vague hope of finding her husband in the neighbour-

hood of the War Office had drawn her feet westward. It seemed possible to her that he had received some call to service necessitating an abrupt departure; he had thrown out a hint of such on the previous evening. Doubtless some message or note to herself had miscarried.

Disappointed love demands its working hypothesis, and will construct and cling to the incredible, so there be hope and comfort therein.

She sate and waited, there was no object in walking further, nor was she capable of much more exertion. At intervals she yawned and strong shudders shook her light form. She mechanically watched the passers-by.

There were fewer to take the air to-day. A lady passed, a lady of the *petit maître* gender, some sixty-six inches in height, of which four must be credited to a wondrous erection of false hair, and another to the scarlet heels of the buckled shoes upon which she tottered, steadying herself with a ribanded crook *en bergère*, as tall as her little self. The lady was of any age which you might choose to suppose; there was powder upon her hair and rouge upon her cheeks; patches called attention to wrinkles which she fondly hoped would pass for dimples. Her eyes, from the habit of thirty years, roved right and left in search of admirers, as she rustled past, slowly swinging her hoop and conversing in a high-pitched, creaking voice with a tall, angular young officer of one of the Highland regiments. The young gentleman carried the lady's hooded cloak, and kept as near to her elbow as the extravagant radius of her farthingale permitted. A fat poodle panted at her heels.

A black servant dawdled behind, a big, ugly, over-fed, lark-heeled West African, his blubber lips ever upon the move, his eyes rolling loosely in his head. They rolled upon Sue where she sat, and overlooked her with a slave's scorn of a mean white; they returned to her with interest. The fellow stopped, was staring, posing, straddling before her, scratching his woolly poll.

"Huh! I seen ye befo', missie, ho! ho!" he remarked, and slouching after his mistress called her attention to the gray-cloaked figure. The lady paused, questioned her man incredulously, whilst using a long-handled eye-glass. A distant inspection proving unsatisfactory, the party turned and strolled slowly in the direction of the seat. Sue found herself the subject of an exacting scrutiny, the strange lady looking her up and down, correcting the possible error of one point of view by another, discussing possibilities.

"Ye are sure, Scipio? Sure? Mind! I never pardon mistakes."

"Ho, qui' shoh! ma'am—dis am missy wot come by stage. Qui' shoh."

"Ahem. I don't trust ye. I don't know what to do. 'Tis a risk to speak to these persons. Ye never know what—Young woman, I say!"

Sue, who had kept her eyes upon the ground, ignoring what she was powerless to prevent, and too weary to rise and leave, now raised them.

"La! 'tis Agatha's very self!" cried the lady, low and breathlessly, but with no pleasure in her voice. "Who are ye, miss? and how came ye here? And what d'ye mean by playing hide-and-seek with me for three weeks, eh? Answer me, I say! Why don't ye speak? Ye are Susan Travis, plain enow."

"My name is Susan, madam, Susan Tighe. But what am I to you, may I ask? I think I never met ye before." Susan's beautiful, sad face was flushed for a moment. She had half arisen when she found herself addressed, and now reseated herself faintly, for the face, peering into her own, troubled her. The voice had notes in it which were teasingly familiar, and although the rouged cheeks and false hair disguised resemblances, the eyes and the eyebrows were the eyes and the brows of the aunt whom she had buried at Chester.

The two women, the painted old maid of fifty, and the fasting, exhausted girl of eighteen, studied one another's faces for some moments, each finding the features of the dead in the face of the living. The elder woman spoke first.

"I? I am your aunt Camilla. Who else? What?"

"But, ye were *dead*. They told me so at your house. The funeral was over. The place was sold and shut up. I could not get in. At least they told me"—for the other was very obviously and haughtily alive—"Oh, why did they say so? Oh, what have I done?"

"That," remarked Miss Camilla Draycott severely, "is what I intend to know. *Dead?* absurd! Your soldier friend beat my boy, Scipio, here, whom I sent to meet ye at the coach-office, and carried ye off, nulus bolus, I suppose ye will say, to a haunt of his own. Oh, don't deny it! We traced ye so far—an honest fellow of a hackney coachman. The woman of the house, too, though no better than she should be, in my opinion, a creature with a hair-pin in her mouth, admitted as much. Ye declined her offer of shelter, miss, ye know ye did: and despite her warnings as to how it would turn out, drove away in a chaise with your beau. Where is he now? Don't lie to me, miss! He has deserted ye, of course: any one can see that. Naturally: I thought as much.

And ye will be expecting me to take ye in, a damaged article ; but no thank ye ! ”

“ Madam ! Aunt Camilla, if ye are Aunt Camilla, ye don’t understand. What could I do ? The black was in drink. I recollect him now, and got fighting——” Scipio bawled repudiation until silenced by his mistress. Sue continued : “ The coachman said he came from you ; I gave him your address——”

“ But allowed him to take ye to another house, in Camomile Street, out east.”

“ Surely no ; I think not. Yet it might have been—must have been, if ye say so ; but how was I to know ? He said—the woman next door said—oh, I can’t explain ! ”

“ Possibly not, miss.”

“ Indeed, ye are hard upon me, Aunt. I was never in London before, and all the houses are so alike, and after dark, too. They assured me ye were dead, and that wicked woman would not take me in ; ’tis false what she told ye : she has deceived us both. But why ? She said she saw ye die, she told me your last words ; she spoke of the bailiffs and the auction and all. Could there have been another Miss Draycott ? What was I to do ? She urged me ; he pressed me ; even the sailor thought I had better——”

“ A sailor in it ? Lord save us ! ”

“ ——and we—I was married.”

“ *Mar—ried ?* ” echoed the elder lady, curtseying ironically before executing a tiny half pirouette to enable her to appeal effectively to a scandalised universe. “ Married ? Who by ? Where ? When ? *Legally*—at that time of night. Impossible ! ”

She mutely drew her glove and showed her ring.

“ Pooh ! Any slut can buy a ring. Where are your lines ? ”

Sue’s face of blank bewilderment was no protection from the acrid scorn of her outraged relative.

“ So, madam, that is your tale. Ye have made a runaway match with a town bully ; jumped the broomstick without witnesses, in a house which ye know not the name of (but *I* do), without clergy, bans, licence, or lines, and are now upon the street. Is it not so ? Answer me : are ye not upon the street ? ”

“ Yes, I suppose I have been, since my breakfast,” assented Sue, wholly unaware of the construction the words bore. Her beautiful sad eyes filled and ran over, her mouth quivered ; but the woman who had defrauded her sisters of their inheritance years before, and hated them ever since, had no pity.

“ On the street ! Oh ! ” She uttered a little affected shriek.

"La, I said so—she admits it. What think ye of that, Mr. Chisholm, for a piece of impudence?"

The youth, who at the beginning of this scene had turned his back, but had since been gradually drawn to side-glances by the golden cadences of Sue's marvellous voice, that pleading, protesting voice, now swung round, and came into the conversation bluntly enough, and at his first word Sue was sure that she had met him somewhere before.

"I dinna think the young leddy jalouses what ye're meanin', ma'am; I think——"

"Highly, tighty! Ye *think*, my boy, do ye? 'Tis the last fault I'd have charged ye with. Yes, yes, a pretty face and a sad tale have turned your head in a little. I had better protect ye, sir, for these creatures are marvellous clever." Then turning to her niece, "Madam (I can no longer call ye miss), I wish you a happy issue to your adventure, and a good-day!" She bobbed a second insolent curtsey, and minced off, laughing shrilly; the panting lapdog followed, the black bringing up the rear.

Sue, plunged in still deeper wells of misery than before her coming and these revelations, sate mute and utterly miserable. Her lines? Why had she not thought of this at the time, or since? Why had not Con? There should have been something in writing, no doubt. The girl had never been present at a wedding, having lived since her childhood with an invalid and a pair of old maids, and knew as little law as a maiden of eighteen commonly knows, which is just none at all. Yet, in the back of her mind lay some dim, confused ideas of the uses of a church register. Lines? Old Millie had once made use of the term in converse with a neighbour.

This was a blow. The day, cold before, grew bitter, and the gray park, the city she had left, its crowds and sounds, inhuman. The despair of the young is very terrible: they have no resources, no experience. For one wretched minute Sue was within the grip of the giant, then, rallying her valiancy, she arose against him: she would cling to her belief in her husband against the world, against appearances, against his own act. His wife she was, her husband was he—nothing should separate them, neither the barbarity of his service regulations, nor distance, not the bitter words of others, nor her own weakness. She would, if need were, beg her bread across sea and land until she found him. Her heart grew warm again within her as she thus resolved. If things were impossibly black around her, there was the better reason for moving on; they could not be worse elsewhere, and might be better. She arose, and, holding by the back of the seat,

stood considering her next direction, tottering a little, for her limbs were stiff. Swift masculine steps were approaching. The tall young Scots officer stood before her. "Mistress Tra-viss, I thenk——"

"I am Mrs. Tighe, sir," corrected Sue with dignity.

"A thoosand pairdons, ma'am; 'twass an inadvairement." He blushed furiously. Sue drew her cloak around her and turned, she desired no conversation with strange men.

"Ye are left, as I fear, ma'am, in a sair quandary, withoot siller. Is not that sae?"

Sue's proud lips were sealed, her chin raised, her eyes fixed upon the blurred black trees beyond this intrusive boy. But he held his ground, though obviously a prey to shyness.

"Ma'am, this maunna be. A leddy, a young leddy, canna fend for hersel' wantin' bawbees, and in sic weather; I am certain sure ye hae bin tellin' true. I find it, here"—he touched his breast. "I wuss to God I had a roof of my ain. 'Pon my sawl, I do! Or kent ane honest wumman in all Lunnon Toun. I am by wi' her, there"—he indicated, with a gesture of restrained disgust, Miss Camilla at the end of the walk, awaiting his return to her side. "Ma'am, ye maunna gang wantin' bread. . . . Cot bless ye, Mrs. Tighe!" He bowed awkwardly, a quaint blend of the military and civil salutes, had Sue known it, for the boy was new to his facings.

Sue heard his retreating steps: she had not looked at him. She did not look after him, but—never fear—his rugged, pock-marked face of homely pity would dwell in her memory while life lasted. She must reseate herself, must shut her eyes tightly to keep back the rising tears. When she reopened them and made ready to rise and go, she started, for there upon the seat beside her lay a broad, bright, golden guinea! Then the tears came irresistibly, no winking them back; she bent over the bright little thing, which meant so much to her, weeping passionately and feeling her heart-strings relax and her whole nature soften. Then, say a minute or so later, pride pricked her to her feet. "Oh, I cannot take it. 'Twould not be right. Con will be so angry." She essayed to arise and follow—but whither? The young Scot had left in the opposite direction to that taken by her aunt. Both were out of sight. The Park seemed empty. Plainly she must take the coin or leave it where it lay. She ended by accepting it as the bounty of God Himself.

Of her benefactor she remembered little, but sufficient; his gaunt height and squareness, lissome youth, battered, disfigured cheekbones and eminent hawk nose, red-bridged from much facing of rough weather, as one judged; these, the impressions of one half-glance, came back to her later. She had

been wishing the big, strange, intrusive boy away whilst he stood before her. Now that he was gone past recall, she wished him back again to thank him and ask his name, sure there could be no impropriety in that !

The West End had failed her—she drifted aimlessly eastward and hung about the only thoroughfares she knew—Crutched Friars, Seething Lane and Great and Little Tower Streets. Dusk found her famishing outside a cook-shop in the Minories, lacking courage to enter, to ask for supper and shelter for the night, dreading rebuff, dreading bad company, her nerve shaken by the day's calamities.

Nature grew clamorous ; food she must have. She faltered in, sank into a seat near the door ; the woman eyed her curiously, but asked no questions, and brought tea and toast—her modest demand. How famished she found herself when food was at last within her reach ; how ravenously she ate, how rich, how exquisitely the hot bread smelt ; what savours, what spicery were in the dry, black corner crust ! Her head ceased aching, she felt better after her first mouthful and saw more clearly. The dark little shop was filling, her stall and table, laid for two, was the last unfilled. A burly sailorman lurched slowly in, looked her over squarely, and seated himself opposite to her. She glanced up from her plate, their eyes met, and met again, the waitress drummed the board with an impatient knuckle, expectant of an order. "Brenchcheese an' a dish o' tay, please, ma'am," said the newcomer in a drawling nasal singsong, the last word running up into an almost ludicrous whine, the accent of the seaboard between Boston deeps and the Nore. Sue caught her breath ; the sailorman's frosted cheek puckered, a pair of tufted brows arose until they disturbed the set of an ill-fitting wig, his kindly, wrinkle-embedded eyes peered out upon her sparkling from their darkened hollows ; he leant forward frankly. "Gorramussy, but, yew'll be the dadical gal as I sorter went an' giv' away ? There ! If I dint think so ! Aye ! heow d'yew fare tew find yewrself, ma'am ? "

It was the mariner of her wedding night, and Sue's face, transparently truthful as ever, admitted the recognition.

His tea being served, was poured into his saucer to cool, and he, blowing softly upon it, kept his far-seeing, kindly eye upon the girl, whose woeful story his experience pieced together from her admissions, conscious and inadvertent, checked by some private knowledge of his own, as to which he was silent.

"Missus, I did wrong by thee. I sorter kinder leaned to my own understandin', whereas I should ha' trusted in the Lord. Sims I dint, and here ye be. Yew—thee, I mean—arsted for to come along o' me, an' I put ye off." (The

mariner had a knack of employing the plain language of the Quakers at the beginning of his sentences, but was apt to descend to ordinary pronouns before their end.) "Sims like as if I'd no faith that night—'fore I'd got a mile from where I left thee, some of our Body run up agin me and went and orderd me lodgin', and there I bin iver since. Now, ma'am, if so be yew'll trust thyself along o' me, I'll dew the right thing by ye, this time."

"Anywhere with you, sir," said Sue without a second thought, and still ignorant of her friend's name.

"Tha's better!" rumbled the mariner comfortingly from the depths of a mighty chest, and having looked her over with the eye of a man who had seen some life, ordered a plate of sausages and potatoes placed before the girl, and watched her eat until she could eat no more.

"Thomas Furley, thee must call me, not Mister; yew marn't put no Misters tew it; our folks don't hold with no vain titles and pride. I be a Quaker now, dost thee see? And now we'll be gettin' along home." (Blessed word.)

BOOK IV
HARD NUTS AND SOFT KERNELS

CHAPTER I

A HAVEN OF REFUGE

BETWEEN Seething Lane and Trinity Square, abutting upon historic Tower Hill, runs a passage misnamed Catherine Court. The origin of the name I will not stop to discuss, nor whose is the cognisance which crests the wrought-iron grille at either end of the little thoroughfare, a deminegress, or belle sauvage, cinctured and garlanded, bearing dextrally a palm. Within these gates you shall find ten grim buildings now let as offices, which were dwellings at the time of our story, dating, at a guess, from Dutch William's day, small, dark and cramped, four floors of two rooms apiece served by a staircase. Their front windows stare uncompromisingly into those across the court; their backs look out into yards so tiny as to suggest the airing of one pillow-slip at a time. These in the eighteenth century were the homes of substantial merchants of the second class, who might look, if they were persons of unimpaired constitutions, to see their sixtieth birthdays; most of them, I think, died younger. To bring up families in such surroundings they were forbidden to hope. It was the deaths of his children which drove the cit afield.

Here in the year 1779 dwelt a certain Phaniel Hippisley, shipowner, and it is with him and with his that we have to do in this chapter.

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The bell of St. Olave's, Hart Street, at the top of the lane, struck seven. The clock of Allhallows Barking, in Tower Street at the bottom, corroborated after an interval sufficient

to accentuate self-respect and give colour to a claim for independent judgement.

Without, it was thick, cold, and as dark as a winter's morning in town has a right to be. Within No. 6 Catherine Court it was warm and cozy. A cheerful little fire which had found its purpose in life since a smoky birth an hour before, purred in a small wainscotted room upon the first floor front, where Mr. Hippisley, who had left his chamber across the landing half an hour earlier, sate with his back to the hearth and his feet upon a demijohn of hot water, masticating slowly, for his teeth were few and precious. He wore a little black wig which went somewhat oddly with the crowsfeet and wrinkles of the face it framed—a sharp-featured, non-committal, letter-of-the-law, welcome-to-all-you-can-get-from-me sort of face, the visage of a man of business, strict but just, and capable of kindness if you could get the right side of him. But of this amiable weakness he was resolutely unconscious, and, one fears, would have been somewhat ashamed of his lapses had these come to the knowledge of his acquaintance. He wore around his throat a rather dingy white neck-cloth, and was otherwise very plainly dressed in a long-skirted coat of pepper-and-salt with knee-breeches and waistcoat of the same. His stockings were grey-ribbed worsted-knit; there was not a point of colour about him, nor a hint of the possession of either of the precious metals. Such was Phaniel Hippisley, unmarried, methodical, abstemious, and punctually honest, a Quaker of the Quakers, and of the straitest sect of that religion.

As for the room in which he sate, 'twas dingily bare to our eyes, though precisely right in those of its owner. There was never an ornament on the mantelshelf, nor a print upon the walls. These were covered with books to the top of the panelling; books lay in piles in the corners, and between the three unused chairs; and such books! Folios some, and quartos some, and some Elzevirs, but all, or nearly all, in the learned languages.

The master of the house masticated to the seventh stroke of the clock before taking off the remains of his breakfast beer; then, having wiped his lip, closed the little Greek Father in which he was reading as he ate, pushed his plate from him and snuffed the candle, he reached for the Bible, which lay within arm's length upon the ledge of his scrutoire (small was the room), jingled a shrill-tongued hand-bell and awaited results.

Followed a pushing back of chairs in the room overhead, the sitting-room of his housekeeper Jemima and her husband (and Mr. Hippisley's clerk), Jasper Tutty. Their bedroom was upon the same floor at the back. To be precise (and

this household was precision exemplified), the second floor was theirs, as the first floor was their master's, and the ground floor the Firm's, sheer commerce. The basement was neutral territory, copper and coals.

Of the third floor and its occupants we will speak presently and at large.

Let us first realise the Hippisley household, its master, already described, served in their diverse capacities by an elderly couple. Thus had these three dwelt in a taciturn amity and mutual respect for six-and-twenty years without addition to, or diminution from, their number, until three weeks before the opening of this chapter.

But I find myself anticipating, and must bring my facts up to date or we shall never know where we are. It was six-and-twenty years since Jemima Truelove, Quakeress and widow, a person of the discreetest and soberest demeanour, darning of stockings and preparer of meals to her celibate master, had asked his permission to take in as her lodger his confidential clerk, Jasper Tutty. All three were members of the Society of Friends, worshipped at the Bull and Mouth Meeting-House, Gracechurch Street, had known one another for years, and were even then middle-aged. Consent had been given; marriage had followed, a natural and desirable sequence, which, however, it appeared that the master of the house had not anticipated, and against which he bore his testimony by persistently regarding the husband's status as that in which he had first carried his hat upstairs. In the counting-house he was Jasper, in the rooms above he was still "thy lodger." For six days a week on the floor devoted to business, where, from their shelves, rows of old ledgers awaited the fires of a day of judgement which still delayed, and watched the filling-up of their successors, master and man, in complete accord, drew charter-parties, examined policies of assurance, scrutinised bills of lading, and attended to the needs of the Hippisley fleet of ten well-found brigs. Outside the house, on their walks to and from meeting, their converse was entirely amicable; it was only within-door, and after the hours of business, that the employer applied to his old servant (and friend) a term which kept in remembrance his ancient grudge.

I would not have you think that these were trivialities which amused an uneventful existence; during his forty years and more of ship-owning, Friend Hippisley had seen reverses of fortune. Two of his bottoms had been taken by the French; one had been posted at Lloyd's missing (ominous word!) and three had made shipwreck in one form or another. In these latter adventures Jasper Tutty had borne a man's part, over-

seeing the salving of freight at Sheringham ; posting over snowy roads to Lydd to take over a strand. During his master's one serious illness, he, acting upon a power of attorney, had successfully kept things going, and had excellent reasons for believing that his employer trusted and understood him, and for his own part cared not a jot by what name he was called.

Being sure of his ground, he could take a liberty upon occasion, and of his own motion had offered house-room and hospitality to one Thomas Furley, an ex-gunner in the service of the East India Company, who, having for conscience' sake refused any longer to bear arms, had lost his rating and employment. This man, having given such practical demonstration of his adherence to the principles of Friends, had recently been received into membership. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century such admissions were rare. The followers of Penn were no longer persecuted ; they were asleep upon their father's reputations, and, incidentally, had grown well-to-do. The Furley case made a pleasant noise in the ears of a safe and comfortable generation, and Jasper Tutty, who had never suffered in person or purse for the views which he professed, welcomed this new convert to his hearth quite in the spirit in which a tailor stands treat to a soldier home from a campaign.

It was the wife who broke the news to the master of the house.

" Know him ? Furley ? " answered the master to her introductory question. " I was upon the appointment to visit him on his application. Didn't make much out of him. A person with little to say for himself. Told us a ' you,' ' your,' Sunday sort of story. We recommended reception. Well, what of Thomas Furley ? "

" I never did see anything to equal you men," remarked Jemima. " Thou ' recommended reception,' put his name upon the Meeting-book and left him just as hungry as thou found him. Oh, you men-friends ! "

" Hungry ? What's that ? How ? Thou'llt not tell me he was in want. Then what did such a person mean by applying for membership with Us ? "

Friend Hippisley was only expressing the natural resentment of a comfortably busy person desirous of standing well with himself, who, whilst jogging his daily round, has run up against an intrusive and angular fact.

" Thou art better disposed than thou wishes thy friends to think thee, Phaniel Hippisley," said the woman severely. Having made her confession with more than a touch of a judge pronouncing sentence, she stood pleating the corner

of her apron. Her master, who knew in his heart that he had a weakness for close-fisted, adequate, private kindnesses which he would have blushed to have had known, sucked in his lips.

"And I've said to Jasper often and often, 'That front attic was meant and intended for a prophet's chamber; and we with life slipping away'; and he've said, 'But where's the prophet?' So, when friend Furley come along it did seem a leading of Providence, and I felt sure as thou wouldst raise no difficulties."

"Me?" grunted her master. "Thou always did do just what pleased thee in this house, Jemima. Difficulties? But this at least wasn't thy doing. If the man is in let him keep in, but——" with an effort to recapture the position—"this mustn't occur again. . . . Seems to me thy lodger has taken in a lodger."

The hospitality was amply repaid. Never at No. 6, Catherine Court was better bargain driven. The latest convert to peace principles might strike fastidious members of the religious society which had admitted him as a brand plucked from the burning (with some of its soot adherent), and in truth bore himself more like a weather-hardened Peter than a saint of Cæsar's household; but, as Phaniel Hippisley presently discovered, 'twas impossible to put him out of his place aboard-ship. As master stevedore, rigger, storekeeper, and ship's husband at large, the man was invaluable. In Bugsby's Reach lay the firm's latest purchase, a fine 'snow' of three hundred tons, which Hippisley had determined to convert to a brig. The oversight of the work was committed to Furley, also the stowage of cargo.

Now it had been upon the night of Susan's unfortunate marriage that Furley, exactly at the end of his resources, was chance (?) met, recognised, questioned out of his secret indigence, taken home and entertained by Jasper Tutty.

And it was three weeks later that the ex-gunner, in charge of the *Mary of Yarmouth*, aforesaid, whilst receiving freight, had light vouchsafed him upon the marriage; a matter which still troubled his conscience. A sea-chest came over the ship's side bearing an inscription in paint that had not had time to harden.

MAJOR C. BOYLE,

H.M. HARDENBERG'S REGT. FOOT, GIBRALTAR

The thing had hardly reached the deck before it was reclaimed by a red-faced and imperative gentleman with a noticeable Irish accent in a dinghy hailing from the transport

Mary of Shoreham, five lower on the tier, a gentleman who abused the wherryman for delivering his kit to the wrong address, and who professed himself its owner, the Major Boyle of the inscription. No consignment-note had come with the chest, nor had any receipt been given for it. "'Tis not on my manifest, ye can have it. 'Tis just a mistake, and I'd have ye to stop your swearing," had been Furley's word as the chest went overside again, and it was only when the claimant had departed with his property, leaving the blundering wherryman unpaid, save with ill words and an offer of worse, that the Quaker remembered the bridegroom into whose hands he had given a shrinking girl three weeks before ; a deed of which he had repented ever since.

Furley thought slowly, and at the time had his hands full : there were stevedores below and a lighter alongside with XX from Thrale's Brewery destined to appease the thirsts of British soldiers at Gibraltar : duty tied him to his post, but, whilst denied instant action, he thought the more. Cornelius Tighe, Major, was the name of the bridegroom upon the lines in his pocket-book, yet here was the same man passing himself off as Major C. Boyle, and bound for Gibraltar. What had become of the lady ?

By the time that lighter was empty, a strong suspicion glowed in the Quaker's honest bosom, a surmise which pricked him to inquire, and if need be to act ("I were on-faithful, that time, 'tis sartainly my job"). But that contrary luck, or fate, or overruling, which thwarts and entangles and guides human purpose, intervened. Whilst the *Mary of Yarmouth* was taking in cargo, her all-but namesake the *Mary of Shoreham* had battened down the last of her hatches, set her head-sails, cast loose from her mooring-buoy, and was gone down the river with the tide.

Furley watched her departure with some not unnatural chagrin.

"'Tis the will o' Providence, seemin'ly, but——" He spat overside, and that very night the good fellow came upon the deserted bride in that Minories cook-shop, yes, upon the veritable Susan Agatha Travis of the lines.

The girl's exhaustion, her physical and mental distress, warned her preserver against telling her what he had seen that afternoon. She could not have borne the news ; it would keep ; had he not the name by which the man was now passing, his destination, and the ship in which he sailed, safe in his pocket-book ?

And thus, having dealt with arrears and cleared up to the point, we get back to Mr. Phaniel Hippisley, still with his feet upon the demijohn and his finger upon the hand-bell,

the Book open before him, his spectacles across his nose, and his eye upon the door, listening to the feet of his household upon the stair.

Now Mr. Hippisley, although elderly, retained his faculties; his ear was particularly delicate, and from long practice was versed in the wonted sounds of his small household. To the footfalls of his ancient housemates he was well accustomed, to those of the Addition he was by way of growing familiar, and it seemed to him that on this morning the family made more noise than usual in coming downstairs to its exercises.

The door was decorously rapped, and opened, and into the dim-lit room came Jasper and Jemima according to the usage of over a quarter of a century, an unobtrusive middle-class couple. Close behind them came the Addition, that four-square mass of seafaring manhood whom we have met in other surroundings, but in none more to his liking. He was bearing a stool in hand, a novelty in procedure which his master and host observed with surprise, for there were already three vacant chairs in the room. Then Phaniel Hippisley, his finger upon the open page, straightened his back with a slight start, for a fourth person was framed by the dark doorway, a woman, for she came forward softly, gently, and with hesitation, a girl, young, beautiful, and sad.

Mr. Phaniel Hippisley took a long slow breath, regarding this apparition over the tops of his glasses with something approaching aversion. Worse (if there be degrees in incomplete spiritual declension), he almost broke his own rule of never addressing his household before the Family exercise. So, giving a touch to the spectacles with the hand that was not engaged in marking the verse, and with a slight movement of the nostril and upper lip, by way of perfecting the sit, the good man addressed himself to the passage for the day, droning steadily through the chapter in an unemotional nasal staccato reserved for these occasions, and accenting the final syllables of *blessèd* and *cursèd*, eyes and lips charged with the work in hand, mere automata, his mind the while at work upon this fresh encroachment. (It was carrying things too far . . . he must make a stand. . . . Jemima was getting above herself . . . give her an inch.) The voice of the reader, unheard by himself, who was elsewhere arranging his plan of campaign, rose and fell in sing-song cadences derived from early recollections of similar occasions sixty years before, when his father's father, a relic of the times of martyrdom, who had testified before the Lord Mayor and suffered for it in Newgate, divided the scripture in his son's household. The chapter, taken in rotation, not by choice, was Matt. xxv., a chapter of forty-six verses, known to the reader by heart,

who could have repeated it blindfold, and which, from extreme familiarity, had long ceased to connote definite ideas. Now and again, despite his preoccupation, a word or a verse pricked through and touched him with a novel sense of congruity.

"—*the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.*"

Might there or might there not have been detected the faintest hint of subdued complacency in the reader's voice? It was gone in a moment; he proceeded without haste or rest. "*Unprofitable servant*" came a little later, and ap-
positely. But the words of the Book have a way of getting through even the indurated callosities of an elderly formalist wrapped in the self-complacent virtue of an honestly spent life. The chapter in hand concludes, as we know, with a tremendous forecast of the Last Assize, the ultimate weighing and separation of the doers from the talkers, and a summons to every child of woman to remember others and to forget self, under which even a Shaftesbury and a Howard must shiver.

"*Depart from me, ye cursèd*" (ye cursèd! can this be the voice of the veritable Christ?) *For I was an hungered and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took Me not in; naked and ye clothed Me not, sick and in prison and ye visited Me not. . . .*" The voice went on delivering the despairing appeal of the fat, and the comfortable, and the careless, stuffed ear and averted eye, too late aroused—and hesitated for some fraction of a heart-beat over the sentence.

"*Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these, ye did it not to Me!*"

The reader stopped. His eyes closed. The morning exercises of that household were customarily concluded by thirty-five or forty seconds of a silence so absolute as to suggest that the bodily functions of the participants in the rite were temporarily suspended, and that not merely muscular action, but respiration and circulation were in abeyance. When, as one awakening from a trance, Phaniel Hippisley removed his feet from his hot-water bottle, raised his eyebrows and closed the Book, the secular business of the day was understood to have begun, business for which these moments of introspection were the necessary preparation. It was then that in the normal course of things Jasper Tutty would have descended to his ledgers, leaving his Jemima to confer with her master as to the dinner and the affairs of her province.

But on this particular morning the signal of dismissal was delayed, and when it came, was incomplete and indefinite.

Friend Hippisley opened his eyes but did not close the Bible, nor did he give the customary scrape with his feet. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" Not Jasper, nor Jemima; they, good souls, whilst recognising the necessity for an explanation, were for postponing it as long as might be possible. Nor Phaniel Hippisley, who, for all his irritation, was as unwarlike a person as you shall meet in a twelvemonth, and fluttered beside by the physical proximity of a comely and modest young woman—such a proximity as had not befallen him for many a year—and—and, I repeat, a new and disquieting sense of the significance of certain verses of Holy Writ. Hence, whilst the three elders were waiting upon one another, Furley leapt into the breach. Clearing his throat sonorously and placing one great hand upon the table-cloth, he drew Susan forward with the other, using a singular and paternal gentleness. "Phaniel Hippisley, sir," he began, "this here be a young female, Susan—Agathy—Tighe, by name, as I warnts thee to sorter run thy eye oover afore I speak to thee about her. Susan, ma'am, this here be Friend Hipp'sley, as thee've heerd tell on; and, now, if thee dawn't mind steppin' on deck—upstairs, I mean, we'll talk thee oover a bit."

The girl thus drawn to the front timidly raised her beautiful eyes, and met those of the gray-faced elder, a-shine in the candle-light, surprised, steady, and critical.

"He looks good," thought she.

"She looks good," thought he, and watched her curtsy and pass from the room ungreeted, modest and silent.

"And, who, may I ask—is this—er—person?—and—" began the good man, hesitatingly at first, but with the sound of his own voice came courage to protest against the intrusion; and had he been permitted to finish his first sentence, it is possible that his perturbed indecision might have crystallised into speech of a hardness surprising even to himself, and out-running first intention, but which once uttered, his strength of will would scarcely have permitted him to recede from. Moreover, crystals have sometimes a cutting edge.

But Furley bore him down: Furley, leaning half across the little table; Furley of the vibrant voice, deep-set eye, and gnarly hand, was speaking, was plunged into his recital up to the neck. There was no stopping him; the man's personality carried everything before him. Nor did Hippisley stand upon his dignity or his rights as men of temper do, but conceded and listened, and was presently drawn in and interested in that gruff, rumbling, headlong story.

"And, as her husband—if so be 'tis a marriage—" the lines lay between them upon the table, "and, as the rawskle

hev bin and gone and giv' her the slip and shipped for Gibraltar, and, as by the finger o' Providence, I were 'lowed to see him start, yes, and be taking in cargo for the same dadical port, I sez, sez I, 'She'll be arter follerin' of her man, sure-ly, so I laid it afore the Lord larst night, and He sims willin' for me to give her a berth out in the *Mary*—I paying what's fair, for 'tis no consarn o' thine, Friend Phaniel, coming as it did all along o' my takin' a course over the edge o' my chart, and not seeking guidance ontill the mischief was done."

"Most extraordinary story that I ever heard in my life!" gasped Hippisley, coming to the surface as from a long immersion, feebly combative and seeking support where he could get it. "Most extraordinary, and I must add, most inconvenient. And, I did say, *Jemima*, that it was not to occur again: thou remembers? Yes, where is this sort of thing to stop? Where can we put her?" weakening. "Am I to be crowded out of house and home? If I pass over this, whom will you be springing upon me next? Here is thy lodger's lodger brings home a lodger!"

Thus appealed to, the housekeeper came into it. "I know—I see—and it's very sad" (an indefinite stroke aimed at large), "and there's the back attic, as thou never puts foot into from one year's end to the next, and the poor young thing, where *was* she to go? and, oh, Phaniel Hippisley, she is a dear!—a *dear*!" the faded old eyes winking and filling behind dimmed glasses, and the wrinkled old nose going like a rabbit's. "And, after all, there must be some meaning in scripture—as to taking in strangers, now——"

But here the pent wrath of Master Furley broke dam. "Took her in! Tha's jest what he did. But if I'd a knowd in time what the (by-our-lady) rawskle was up tew, I'd a-broke his (condemned) neck for 'm and took the consekences."

"Tut, tut, Thomas; thou forgets thyself, and thy Christian profession; thou art One of Us, mind," was Hippisley's mild rebuke.

The mariner plucked his wig from his head, tweaked a curl from the caul, strode to the hearth, and laid his expiatory sacrifice upon the red coals without a word.

CHAPTER II

NO. 6, CATHERINE COURT

“AH, Mr. Hippisley, I am fortunate in finding you disengaged—although I fear I shall prove an unwelcome caller, as usual.”

The speaker was the rector of St. Olave's, a grave, shy, middle-aged man with the pale, delicately featured face of a scholar. He had known the Quaker by sight for twenty years, and had distrained upon his goods five times for church rates. It was by the purest chance in the world, the accident of a copy of St. Augustine's Confessions in the original Greek having been seized, five years since (by mistake, in a table drawer), that he had discovered in this recalcitrant sectary a kindred spirit, a fellow-student, and the one and only man in his parish with whom he could converse upon equal terms.

“Amazing!” exclaimed the rector when the light dawned upon him—the fellow could, and did, read Plato with his feet upon the fender, albeit he preferred the Fathers. He could give you whole screeds of Chrysostom *ore rotundo*, at a moment's notice; he knew, positively *knew*, his Testament from end to end in the original, and was familiar with the apocryphal gospels and epistles. Yet the man would be damned, infallibly damned, sir; no help for him! He was not only schismatic, but unbaptized—frightful! “Don't blame me, Mr. Hippisley; I wouldn't singe a hair of your wig, myself, but, positively, I see no hope of escape for ye; I couldn't even plead invincible ignorance for ye—I can only thank my stars the matter is out of my hands, and leave ye to the uncovenanted mercies of the Almighty!”

“Where I am well content to be left, my friend,” the Quaker had replied, and, exchanging amicable pinches, the disputants had parted for the time. But they met again, and when they met they disputed, politely, as the learned who respect one another's learning, have at last learnt to dispute, but neither had ever crossed the threshold of the

other (a counting-house was another matter, and was only entered by the rector upon business, his own business, as upon the present occasion).

"I trust thou art well, Friend Tomlyn," said Hippisley, beaming kindly over his spectacles upon his caller. "Wilt thou sit? What is it—another of thy church rates on the stocks?"

"Launched, my dear sir: have ye not seen the demand-note? I just looked in to put ye upon your guard. I know it is little use asking ye to be reasonable, but let us have no mistakes this time. I profess I believe ye take joyfully the spoiling of your goods—I don't. If anything ye really value is taken, 'tis I shall be distressed" (chuckling ruefully); "Indeed, I shall make it my business to buy it in and return it, I warn ye now! So spare my feelings—and pocket. Come, the men shall look in on Wednesday week (Fourth Day, you call it, don't ye?). They shall have orders to enter the first floor front. Am I right? I thank ye." Hippisley had smilingly nodded. "The amount, with their charges, will be five thirteen nine, a monstrous sum, I admit; but 'tis your own obduracy that piles it up. But we won't go into that——"

"I thank thee, friend, for the forbearance——!"

"Ironical, as usual, Mr. Hippisley. But, to these arrangements—can we?—shall I?"

"I will leave thee with my clerk presently," said Hippisley, who knew that between Jasper and the rector a perfect understanding subsisted, and that the raiders would find a bag containing the precise sum required upon the table of the first room which they entered.

"Nay, do not rise, unless indeed thou art pressed for time, and I think I am the only one of our people in thy parish. I desire thy advice——"

"Indeed?" The visitor was all polite attention and solicitude; advice!—this was a new departure. "I shall be most happy to place my poor abilities at your service."

"Thou hast possibly heard of the recent additions to my household."

The rector nodded non-committally, he had heard—reports, most of which he had frankly disbelieved. He was no busybody; he trusted his old neighbour, and whilst feeling bound to deplore his prospects in the life to come, would have gone bail for his good behaviour in this to any amount whatever.

Thus encouraged, Hippisley unfolded the story of Susan's marriage. He told it slowly, accurately, and without comment or embellishment. The rector heard him to the end,

steady-eyed, an excellent listener (which is more than can be said for some of his cloth).

"Poor child!" he murmured, when the tale came to an end; he had met her in the lane twice or thrice, and, like every one else, had been struck by her beauty, her grace, and modesty.

"Is she married?" asked Hippisley, coming to the point.

"That depends upon whether the person who read the service was in orders," replied the rector, nursing his knee. "Irregularities of time, and so forth, are really immaterial; the honest intention goes for something (not for everything, as you Quakers have had occasion to know; it took an Act of Parliament to legalise your marital relations)." Hippisley nodded. "But the Church has never been extreme in the matter—has always leaned to the protection of the woman and her offspring. A ceremony otherwise irregular, if performed *in facie ecclesiæ* would hold good, even if violence were employed, as in these Irish abductions. But you don't allege——?"

"There was no violence. And I cannot say whether the officiating clerk was in orders or no. This paper is all we have to go upon."

"It is just possible that I may be able to ascertain that for you; it seems material, very material. Oct.—that will be Octavius, doubtless, *Baskett*. I wonder if the name be assumed or real? *M.A.* That is a clue. We will try to trace him through his university."

"My friend Thomas Furley has identified the house," said Hippisley, "between the Saracen's Head and Martin Outwich, but Camomile Street is not in thy parish——"

"Immaterial. If he will furnish me with the address, or, better still, accompany me, I will try what I can get from this woman. And, now, as you are obviously busy——" the rector got his heels under him and arose, extending his hand, "and, whilst I think of it, that exhortation to follow bishops and pastors occurs in *Ignatius to the Smyrnæans*."

"It does; in that disputable last chapter. Did it come to thee too after our chat? But thou wilt do well not to rest too much upon it."

"You consider it an interpolation?"

"There is a suspiciously late construction, and, at best, it is unapostolic in feeling (written at a time when church organisation was changing), and plainly with a bias; the writer holds a brief for the New, which was ousting the Old."

"Eh? How so? I really fail——"

"*Episkopos*—originally a secular office, and quite secondary, as I read it, created to relieve the travelling evangelist from

detail, and give him more liberty—was beginning to usurp the apostolic authority."

"So? You will be telling me that the coadjutor (chancellor, rather, the man upon the spot who kept the purse) outgrew his ordinary?"

"Who must have been often absent—on the road, or in hiding, or in prison."

"Plausible, but unproven, Mr. Hippisley. I should like to see your data. But, whatever the origin of the change, the Church sanctioned it."

"Condoned it, and much beside—persecution——"

"Oh, you Friends! Do you never forgive?"—moving towards the door. "But I must be going. By the by, might I?—just a word with Mr. Tutty? And, whilst I think of it, send that rough-hewn proselyte of yours round to the rectory this evening. We may discover something. A hard case—a sad case!"

But the woman of the house in Camomile Street was by this time aware, and by dint of lapses of memory, impossible suggestions, and lying of the futile-obvious sort, defeated her interrogators by impressing the clergyman with the worthlessness of truth itself from such lips.

"This here's a-gettin' too hot-like," muttered the harridan as she watched them leave, her eye to a hole in the dirty blind, and, going upstairs, fetched and pawned the belongings left in her charge by Baskett.

Cambridge knew nothing of the man, but Oxford owned to having bestowed upon him her Bachelorship of Arts (not the Mastership of the signature). He had come up from Shrewsbury. Here was a clue worth following. The Rev. James Atcherley, M.A., Head of Shrewsbury School, had the name upon his books, and suggested reference to a certain Lord Duddingstone, who was reputed to have paid the school fees for the lad whilst *in statu pupillari*. The Rev. Eustace Tomlyn, now hot upon the scent, and reporting progress to Friend Hippisley whenever they met in the street, addressed a civil letter to my lord and took a rebuff.

As a matter of fact, the courteous request for information as to the clerical status of his late amanuensis came before the Viscount upon one of his bad days. The gout was holding him by his most sensitive toe; he had just had a terrific scene with the Hon. Frederick, who, being discovered up to his eyes in debt at Colchester, had been compelled to exchange into a regiment of the King's Hanoverians quartered at Gibraltar, and was by way of being shipped thither at short notice to escape worse. The wretch had wept and writhed upon the carpet, confessing to enormities that raised

his unhappy father's gorge, and at length had been forcibly removed from the room and house, and put upon shipboard at Gravesend under arrest and with strictly empty pockets.

This was the March convoy, the one which rendezvoused in the Solent. Travis sailed by it, unknown to his old enemy, restored to his name and position, an ensign in the 12th Regiment of Foot, but with letters which would ensure his being "lent" to the Garrison Artillery, a corps which stood in need of young officers of education and ingenuity. Hence the lad took with him the latest works in French, English, and German, and a head full of elevations, muzzle-velocities, bursting-charges, time-fuses, and the composition of powders and light balls, long and short chases, and whatever else was engaging the attention of the one scientific corps in the British Army of that day. Justin saw him off, not with empty pockets, and with more than a half promise to follow him, for Chester had been drawn blank, and Sue having been traced to London in company with a lady who was going to Gibraltar, and an Irish major who was believed to have been subsequently seen with her in the Park, and who was thought to have sailed for the Rock (although the name was a difficulty), it was conceivable that the lost girl might have drifted thither.

But why? and in what capacity? There were tragic possibilities about this, or any, theory of the poor child's disappearance, which the men dared not discuss with one another. She was but eighteen—think of it; and so utterly inexperienced. Her brother's face hardened and aged. He blamed himself. "She needed me. She must have written: whilst I——!" Justin hoped doggedly on.

In a word, every clue had failed them, nor did lavish offers of reward bring further information.

Gibraltar was the last hope. Travis was impatient to be gone.

That he, Justin assisting, had exhausted the potentialities before sailing, goes without saying. Their attempts to interest Miss Camilla Draycott in the quest had failed. That lady's attitude was inexplicable to her nephew, who knew nothing of the recognition in the Park, nor that the Rev. Eustace Tomlyn had preceded him with unavailing appeals, and that her young kinsman's urgent requests for an interview were construed by the bitter little spinster as designs upon her pocket. Her door remained obdurately closed. She passes out of this story. Let us pity her. Of all sinners the loveless is the most certainly and severely punished.

Is this discursive? Possibly, the threads of this story are for the moment not so much entangled as wind-borne

and dispersed. Let us catch, then, at my Lord Duddingstone in his character as a correspondent. The noble Viscount's (new) amanuensis, obviously writing under dictation, besought the Rev. E. Tomlyn to believe that his lordship rejoiced to attest the fact that the man Baskett was an ingrate scoundrel and a common thief, consistent to the last, in that having embezzled from his benefactor, he had since robbed the gallows by self-destruction.

His lordship further requested the Rev. E. Tomlyn to address him no further upon a subject at once painful and unsavoury, and begged permission of the Rev. E. Tomlyn to subscribe himself his most obedient servant.

"Final, this? eh, Mr. Hippisley?" queried the clergyman, with a lifting eyebrow, showing the letter.

"He has not answered thy question."

"In so many words? No. But his silence is probably inadvertent. I have ascertained that there is no Baskett in orders in this diocese, nor in the province of Canterbury."

"I thank thee, friend, for thy labours. There is no more to be done in the matter. It would seem that there was no legal marriage."

"No legal marriage," echoed the rector mournfully. "Poor child! You are a kind friend to her, Hippisley, a very father. I wish I could think that ye will reap your reward—elsewhere."

The old Quaker blinked in silence, still upon his feet, awaiting the delayed departure of his visitor, who seemed to have something yet upon his mind, probably the usual something. Out it came.

"You *must* know, Hippisley, a man with your mind, your head, your reading! 'Tis frightful; I think of ye at night. You officiate as a minister, I believe (is that the word?) among your people——"

"Nay, I have never felt liberty to open my lips in meeting—I have no message."

"Really? You surprise me! What is your Society thinking about? How can it spare ye? And, to think——!" The rector, forgetful of the business which had brought him, went forth into the court suppressing the conclusion of his remark, painfully percipient of a proximate waste of excellent material. Oh, the pathos of damning so ripe a scholar and so lucid and charitable a soul upon general principles!

And time ran, and the lengthening days of March stirred the slowly moving blood in old veins; in those of Mr. Phanuel Hippisley, to wit.

For a fortnight after Susan's first appearance at morning

“reading” (family worship), her host had secretly resented, deprecated, and disapproved. He was not used to young people of either sex. Never in all the long, dry decades of a strenuously quiet life had he had anything to do with a “young person.” As a little, plain-featured, poring boy, “too fond of his book ever to make a man of business,” and with “nothing in him,” he had been snubbed and sat upon by his own sex and ignored by the other. Driven in upon himself for sources of recreation and respect, he had had no occasion to “make a covenant with his eyes that they should not look upon a maid”; poverty, an abstemious habit, and the engrossments of long business hours, the midnight oil of the student, yea, and the maids themselves, had seen to that. A confirmed bachelor at twenty, he had never tried to change his condition. Incidentally he had given the lie to those who had thought ill of his parts, having quietly out-stayed competitors, and by dint of living upon a very little, and seldom making a mistake, had come into his own, and a considerable measure of other people’s. The old gentleman was reputed to be very rich, and knew himself to be well-to-do. He was immensely respected, as any man is likely to be whose few bare words are always and absolutely true, whilst enough of his subterranean beneficence had worked to the surface to save him from the stigma of miserliness.

Yet this queer old stick was not happy. Not that he was miserable. His past lay even and white behind him, drab at its worst, nothing there seriously to challenge self-respect; as to his future, he had long since come to an understanding with himself, with which we have nothing to do. It was his present, the life which was daily slipping through him faster and ever faster (Lord, how swift are the years of the old—even as the weaver’s shuttle!)—the transitoriness of things, I say, which gently troubled him at times when his active day was over, its work well done, freight secured, disputes amicably settled, the affairs of the Hippisley Fleet maintained upon their normal footing of sound workmanship and honest *personnel*. ’Twas at the fag-ends of laborious days such as these that a pining emptiness came over him; a craving for—what? His life had been as well lived as he knew how; no regret gnawed at his heart, yet “one thing, one at his soul’s full scope,” either he had missed, or itself had missed him. It was there, somewhere within him, this clamant, unnamed inhabitant; not a disease, surely? Nor a premonitory weakening of the brain? He satisfied himself upon both points. What, then; spiritual declension? He betook himself to prayer and deadened the unwelcome voice, for a time.

With the coming of Susan the unrest revived. Its crudescence was laid at her door with a conscious injustice that provoked reprisals. She was "in the way." (She slept in the hitherto unused attic, took her meals with those who enjoyed her company, and seldom crossed his path except at morning and evening exercises.) But the house "was not convenient" for such an inmate. (Pure selfishness, this, answered curtly enough by common sense to the effect that the young woman's presence was temporary and unavoidable.)

But 'twas the house divided (a division wholly unsuspected by the second floor and attics); Hippisley was found commiserating himself upon an unspecified "disturbance to his habits"; Phaniel riposting with denial of the fact, and congratulations to the firm upon having been instrumental for once in helping somebody with no claim upon it. Every morning was the silent dispute renewed, every evening, after a couple of hours over *Ignatius to the Philadelphians* or *The Similitudes of Hermas*, the dual personality found peace upon its knees.

Susan's appearance at the Quakers' Meeting House, Gracechurch Street, twice every First Day, and again on Fourth Day forenoons at the mid-week meeting (during which excursion the office was closed and locked), created what one may perhaps describe as a silent uproar. The household, a party of five, was the subject of decorous speculations in the women's lobby. Hippisley occupied a seat under the minister's gallery, detached, unapproachable. The Tuttys, as was to be expected in the case of elderly and regular members, had seats not far below his, one upon either side, for the Friends separated the sexes during worship. Susan was left to the care of Furley, and all the younger friends agreed that it was pretty to see the burly mariner piloting the sweet, sad-eyed young creature to a seat hard by the door, and taking a place as near to her as the width of the dividing gangway permitted.

The Hippisley boarding-house became a byword; his fellow members watched these successive and surprising additions to his household with wonder, awaiting developments; the man himself, a tight-lipped, strong-willed personage, entrenched behind a lifelong habit of reserve, invited no approaches. But what did those poor Tuttys think of it?

It appeared that the Tuttys, both man and wife, made a pleasure of it. Dear Thomas Furley was such company, such experiences, so interesting, so genuine, so simple, so truly good! Whilst, as for Susan Tighe, she was a dear! Thus Jemima, her husband concurring.

Mother Nature had made the girl of noble materials, at once

fine and strong. The instincts of wife and mother moved graciously within her; she would dry a gutter-baby's tears and carry it over a crowded crossing. At the sight of frayed button-holes her thimble burnt in her pocket.

"What is it makes thee so nice, Susan Tighe?" old Jemima would ask, peering at the girl with faded eyes over the rims of double-convex glasses. "I never bore but one child, and the poor little mite died at the week's end, and Jasper and I haven't had much to say to other Friends' children (and there's no young people living in the court nowadays). No; I can't say I'm much given to the young, or taken up with their ways, but——"

"But——" Sue's sweetness and willingness had carried her straight into the poor, dry old heart, affording it four months of placid enjoyment, and a seven years' aftermath of gentle, loving regret: daylight thoughts of that bitter spring when the grim old house blossomed, and darkling bedside prayers for the unforgotten girl, ringed about by cannon-smoke; strange environment! Yes, Susan was more than welcome.

Also, it was quite understood all round that the arrangement was of a temporary character; the young person's husband having preceded her to some port to which one of the Hippisley brigs was bound, a passage out had been arranged for her under Thomas Furley, and this being "gathered," the exercised minds of women Friends who had concerned themselves in matters which in no wise touched them were at rest.

But the mind of Phaniel Hippisley became less and less at rest as the weeks slipped past.

The March days lengthened and the suns of early April warmed the forenoons. The sooty-coated city sparrows were now carrying straws. A thrush sang of mornings in the tree-tops in the Tower moat. Sue could hear the trills through her open attic-casement, beginning before the clack of the mallets began in Cooper's Row—a sound reminding her sadly of America Square. Everybody was so kind to her; these dear, sweet, old folks were goodness itself. It would grieve her to the heart to leave them; but yet—oh, to be sailing south—south! to Con, to her husband! all should yet be explained and put right.

But with Phaniel Hippisley were perplexity and indecision. That one-sided fit of resentment at the girl's unseasonable presence in his house had been brief. It had been followed by a genuine and disinterested concern for her welfare.

As to this elusive and dubious husband, he had been able to assure himself that no such person as Major Cornelius

Boyle—or Tighe—held a commission in the British Army. (That he might be in King George's Hanoverian service did not occur to him.) Still, Thomas Furley's testimony was not to be lightly set aside. A man, an Irishman, believed to be the man, had sailed for Gibraltar, and Sue, having learnt of this, was for following him as way might open. Hippisley, with a heavy heart, set himself to open the way.

Yes, Furley was very positive as to that Irishman's identity, too positive, indeed, but Thomas was not a born Friend. Had not Jasper Tutty, who was upon terms with the managing clerks of all the shipping houses in the City and Surrey side, got sight of that transport's manifest? Neither a Major Boyle nor a Major Tighe had sailed by the *Mary of Shoreham*, nor had she (ostensibly) cleared for Gibraltar; but, with hostilities upon the point of breaking out, that might very well be a blind. Troops were undoubtedly on board, and under the command of a Major St. John, who was to land them at a place called Pendennis, a port unknown to Tutty.

The whole thing was ambiguous, a puzzle to No. 6, Catherine Court; a puzzle to which the attentive reader holds the clue.

Early in their acquaintanceship her host had put the above inquiry on foot. He was still unsatisfied.

"Thy position seems singularly forlorn, Susan. Apart from this unnatural aunt, hast thou no relative living?"

"Only my brother Draycott, sir, a servitor at Christ Church College, Oxford. Oh yes, I wrote to him three weeks and more ago."

"Didst thou post the cover thyself?" inquired Hippisley, making a note of name and address.

"Major Tighe took it to Lombard Street for me, sir," replied the girl, without suspicion that her husband had suppressed the letter.

Hippisley nodded over pursed lips. A man of few words, who seldom announced his intentions, he wrote to a member of his society at Oxford, a watchmaker, and a fortnight later was perusing the reply.

"ALDATE'S, OXFORD,

"2nd mo. 20, 1779.

"RESPECTED FRIEND, PHANUEL HIPPISELEY,—

"In reply to thine of 2nd Month 12th, I am free to tell thee that I have had some personal Acquaintance with the young Person in whom thou art interesting thyself, and after an Intercourse extending over two and a half Years, know nothing of my own Knowledge to his Disparagement.

"I gathered from him that he was an Orphan, and although in a menial Position in his College, Christ Church (so-called),

he always impressed me both by his Conversation and Behaviour as of genteel Upbringing. He was studious beyond most of the Youth here, and was so from his first coming up, which is unusual among them, for such of them as read at all are wont to delay their Reading until their last Year. My young Friend, for so I must still call him, did not fall into this idle Habit, but cultivated the Society of Books rather than of Men, and of Students and ingenious Persons rather than of People of consideration, and was in a fair Way to have taken a good Degree, when certain regrettable Occurrences (of which I have no particular Knowledge) made it needful for him to take his Name off the Books of his College.

"I believe him to have been hardly used, and whilst reprobating the Haste and Violence which he is reported to have displayed, can measurably feel for him.

"Of his present Address I am ignorant, nor should I feel free to disclose it, having his Welfare at Heart.

"I think it due to his Credit to tell thee that a small Loan which he contracted upon the Eve of his Leaving, has within the past Week been repaid, notwithstanding that no Time had been set for Repayment, my young Friend making no Secret of his Destitution and want of Prospects when accepting the Accommodation.

"I remain,

"Thy Friend Sincerely,

"SAMUEL PROSSER.

"TO PHANUEL HIPPISELY,

"Number 6, Catherine Court,

"Tower Hill, London."

The recipient of the above letter read, folded, docketed and laid it aside without remark. This was the sort of news which was almost worse than none. To an absconding husband was now to be added an unsatisfactory, or at least an unproducibile brother; a young person who, from whatever cause, had forfeited the benefits of his college course, and was a fugitive from justice.

Yet it pleased the old gentleman to find his judgement verified, for it had seemed to him from the first that this graceful, soft-spoken young woman, the *protégée* of his lodger's lodger, was come of good stock.

This guest had won her way to the hearts of her entertainers. With the Tuttys she had been Susan from the first, but Furley had yet to come to an understanding with himself as to her proper style. Some consciousness of a higher social grade checked the easy flow of his colloquial goodwill. Nor was his tongue as yet perfect in the plain language of the sect

of his adoption, and, with all the desire in the world to conform, and with all the newborn zeal of a proselyte, the good soul made strange work of the girl's name. "Susan Tighe, ma'am," or "Miss Susan, my dear," were common form, occasionally complicated by "Miss Susan, ma'am," and other combinations, "Ma'am, my gal," and even "Sue, my pretty," and so forth, followed by hasty corrections when consciousness supervened, and relapses upon which the girl smiled as she smiled upon all her hosts, for "the dearest and kindest creatures in the world."

Susan smiled! She had begun to smile again. God had given her a great heart and a springing courage. It was her nature to be happy and to see to it that those around her should share in her happiness. She smiled, and a gleam of sunshine crossed the dingiest room upon the dullest day, and the hearts of her housemates rejoiced.

Youth had come to dwell with them for a season. It might have been fifty years since young feet had tripped up and down that dark stair. Sue's presence awoke old memories, filled their bosoms with pleasant tremors, startled, delighted, and refreshed them. The girl was so gentle, so handy, so grateful, so clever. Jemima Tutty's sight had been failing of late, her master's linen was not what it had been. Men see nothing; but critical, middle-aged Quaker spinsters observed, pitied, and remarked. But now, since February was out, they perceived that these deficiencies had been remedied. A new needle, swift and competent, was at work. The recipient of these daily mercies was less perceptive; another month must pass ere he, so rapid and accurate at figures, was to put two and two together and make—Susan!

CHAPTER III

THE INEVITABLE

To such of us as are comfortably planted in pairs the bachelor withering slowly in his lonely pot is a natural object for pity.

The (assumed) dreariness of his evenings appeals to us as peculiarly melancholy ; we cannot conceive of compensations, nor does it occur to us that he may have pursuits of which he is disinclined to speak to the unsympathetic. Why should your single man have pursuits at all ? For whose benefit does he pursue anything ? He, without wife to call in to rejoice with him over his successes, or children to whom to pass on his collections ?

Which is absurd.

Phanuel Hippisley, for instance, had a darling hobby which he had bestridden almost from his childhood. At a tender age the curiosity of the boy had been aroused by finding strips of undecipherable vellum in the inner bindings of old books, and whilst his schoolfellows, after the manner of boys, were achieving great and permanent effects with hoops, marbles, and tops, he was wasting his time in puzzling out long-extinct scripts. The craze grew upon him ; throughout a longish life he had begged, or bought every scrap of antique parchment that crossed his path, and was long since, albeit he knew it not, one of the first of living palæographers.

The man could have told you at a glance (as a matter of fact, he was not particularly communicative) the age of a mediæval document. "This is a piece of pre-Conquest work," he would say, "and this Plantagenet ; and this, by its poor penmanship, will be subsequent to the Black Death." Moreover, as a collector should, he not only recognised a good thing when he had it in his hand, but knew what to look for, and where it was likely to be found. He neither expected nor desired great things, six inches by two were enough for him as a rule.

For the centuries differ in their ways of doing things. We

of the twentieth are diffuse, or inclining thereto. I, myself, for example (a humble instance, but the first that comes to hand), propose to run to 400 pages. I could not turn myself round in fewer, whilst in a really important matter, calling for the use of parchment, a popular auditor of a Board of Guardians, shall we say, if he have pulled the strings discreetly, may look to be illuminatively addressed upon his retirement from office on six to ten quartos of 9 by 5 vellum, the initial page a compliment gloriously embellished, those following thick with signatures, gratefully commemorative of his genial laxity, the whole Grolier-bound and suitably cased.

Other times, other manners. In the eighth century an East Anglian king, taking thought for the health of his soul, would grant five manors to a certain Pandulphus, abbas of some house long since secularised, to have and to hold, and all this and more, mind you, upon a thin scrap of waxy stuff not one third the area of that half-sheet of notepaper which a modern prime minister has said is sufficient to contain the statement of his views, so transparently plain are those views, so obvious to all men.

But Hippisley had got past charters, toys he held them; they had amused his callow youth and he had put away childish things. For thirty years past he had been digging at manor-rolls and convent books of account, not for their obvious contents—the day of Thorold Rogers was still afar—but for the decipherment of the occasional, cloudy, half-obliterated characters which crossed and underlay the bold, clear, monastic Latin, a script of an earlier day, and Greek, may it please you.

Fifteen lines of an unpublished ode of Pindar had rewarded his search, certain fragments of Sappho, and, what he valued more, three sections of an unknown gospel, heretical doubtless, for he detected gnostic tendencies, but a find worth living for all the same.

This sort of thing pursued by candle-light is hard upon the eyes, and it fell upon a certain evening that Friend Phaniel found himself in need of a stronger lens than the one in hand, and crossed the landing to his chamber to fetch it.

Rubbing his eyes, he went, and muttering a Greek text to himself, walking by the sense of locality rather than by sight, and thus, or ever he was aware, ran full up against some one who was already in the room, Susan Tighe, in short, with her back to the door, humming to herself, her arm to the elbow in one of her host's stockings, her fingers working at the inside heel, where she suspected a hole.

The girl turned with a start, the low lulling tune without words died upon her lips; its presence was automatic. She was

aware that music was interdicted in that Quaker household, but what was within her welled forth at times unbidden and without her knowledge.

"Oh, Mr. Hippisley, sir!" she exclaimed, dropping into the address of her earlier use ('twould have been "Phanuel Hippisley," had she taken a moment's thought). "What can I do for you?"

"Nay, what art thou doing for me?—not this?"

"Indeed, but I am; they are all in holes, those that are not working thin. I must run some at the heel and darn the worst."

"I don't know that I quite——" He checked himself. "Wilt thou oblige me by putting them down for one minute and coming to my sitting-room?" His immediate object was forgotten; a novel and urgent need for an understanding was upon him. "Come with me," and Susan, meekly wondering, came.

Her master and host returned to his room and to his chair, but stood with his hands upon its back; had it been Jemima whom he had called to confer with him he would have sate without scruple. There must have been some indescribable aura of race in the poise of the bright young head and the carriage of the figure which kept the man upon his feet. Yet she seemed the simplest of creatures: her hands folded before her, one still within the stocking, a small finger-tip peeping through a new-found aperture; so helpful, so feminine. Ah, it sent a novel pang to the heart of the old man to see her thus; he bent his brows upon her, moistening his lips, and spoke.

"Thou art really leaving us, Susan Tighe?"

The girl's eyes shone in the candle-light: 'twas of her voyage that she had been singing, although she was unaware of it. There are children and women to whom music is the natural expression of their well-being; are they happy? they sing—anything, nothing reproducible, wordless airs, unconscious impromptus, heart and throat in happy co-operation whilst eye and hand carry forward the business of life. So Sue.

"Yes, indeed, I am going, sir—Phanuel Hippisley, I would say—if thou and Thomas Furley will so favour me," she smiled.

"'Tis a long voyage and a great uncertainty, Susan. The man whom thou believest to be thy husband has thrown thee upon the world, and has left the country under another name, —another name, Susan."

"He must have had his reasons, sir."

"I do not doubt it. But the ceremony—that marriage ceremony—was, I grieve to tell thee, almost certainly illegal.

Yes, there is no such clerk in orders as this Octavius Baskett, none that can be traced, Susan."

"But, sir, your Friends are married without a parson, as I hear——"

"True enough, Susan, but we are under an especial Act, and thou art not One of Us; nor, if thou hadst been, couldst thou have been married by night, nor outside the walls of one of our Meeting-houses. No, my young friend, 'tis a sad business. I deplore it. But thou wilt hardly mend matters by following abroad the man who has wronged thee."

"Sir!—I am his wife in the sight of God! I pray you not to say a word against my husband. I could not bear it, indeed I could not." Her throat worked, her lovely eyes filled, but she would not let herself give way. "Ye mean it kindly, oh, I know!—but—I *must* find him. . . . You believe in the Bible? . . . That text which Friend Hanbury revived last Sund—First Day, '*If two of you shall agree upon earth as touching anything that ye shall ask, it shall be done for you of My Father.*' You believe that, dear Mr. Hippisley?"

"All Holy Scripture is true," he replied guardedly.

"Then, oh, will you join with me; will you make one of the two? We will pray God daily that I may find him."

"Thou shalt have thy way," said Hippisley after a pause, commanding his voice. The girl thought him vexed, but it was not vexation. Only the Recording Angel knew what the man withheld and the bliss he renounced in those moments of silence.

"But understand this, that according to my will and judgement this house is thy home. If—if—worse should befall thee abroad than thy hopes, my ship is ever at thy service; my friend Furley will help thee to the extent of his powers. *Come back to us, Susan.*"

There was a sudden vibrant quality in the voice; its measured restraint was leaving it; the speaker checked himself, and but just in time. The girl understood nothing but that her host's already unbounded kindness had travelled beyond her needs, and was by way of making provision for a future contingency which she resolutely refused to face.

"Oh, Mr. Hippisley, you have been more than a father to me—what can I say? Never, never shall I forget you! Why—why are you all so good to me?"

Alas, poor Mr. Hippisley! The discovery of his guest's ministrations in the matter of stockings and underwear had come over him with a sort of clap, causing mental and spiritual disturbance. That Jemima should have the handling of his linen was in the course of nature, but that this light-limbed, graceful young stranger should so much as touch a garment

of his was another matter. It alarmed his bachelorhood, it smacked of indelicacy (not that he blamed—he pitied her), it disturbed his imagination, tormented his waking thoughts and got itself mixed up with his dreams.

Being painfully conscious of the absurdity and unreason of his objections, he found himself unable to urge them. Nor was there a soul in whom he could confide, nor any of whom he could ask advice. This novel and poignant sense of pity ate and slept with him, it walked and talked with him; never had he felt for a fellow-creature so deeply; nor so earnestly and so helplessly desired to help.

The poor soul was wholly unaware of what ailed him, and the knowledge of the nature of his complaint when it did come came from an unexpected quarter.

The great and notable storm which had ushered in the year had been followed by that memorable frost. For fourscore days the weather held; the ice in the lower Thames was a wonder, and every street was foul with ancient snow; but throughout it all, this hale old man's daily constitutional had consisted of a few brisk turns along Tower Wharf from Lion Gate to East Gate and back. He thought that the easterly winds from off the Essex marshes tasted more freshly there than after their contamination by the smokes of the City.

To him, pacing, closely buttoned, a weight of commiseration upon his clean old heart, comes me the rector of St. Olave's, also constitutionalising, and blocks his Quaker neighbour's path with a forefinger directed at his gastric region.

"Too bad, Mr. Hippisley!—too bad! I gave ye fair warning, but got no help from ye after all. But for the chance of my seeing the lady's name upon the sea-chest, which those rascally bums were carrying off along with your easy chair, as I took it to be (a mere chance, in John Street it was), I should have been put to a pretty penny to buy the things in for ye. What rogues some tradesmen are, to be sure! My plain directions set at nought. They had found the money, but had seized the extra things 'to be on the right side.' Too bad."

"It is gratifying to find thee seeing the business in its true light. My chair was a small matter. I have others. But I thank thee. The chest was another story. It is, as I may say, not my property. In any case its loss would have distressed—a—would have upset plans, delayed arrangements. *She leaves us next week!*"

The last words broke from the speaker under his breath; the tone of them was sorrow's self.

The rector was startled, but made some indifferent remark, deciding that he had misheard, or misunderstood, and that,

at any rate, the matter was none of his business. He resolved to forget it, and plunged into the topic which lay close to his heart.

"As to that last chapter in *Ignatius to the Smyrnæans*, Hippisley, after consulting the authorities I think I am justified in saying they are against you, Lowth, now——"

"A fair Hebraist, my friend, but as a patrist I put him second to thyself."

The rector bowed. "But, apart from the bishop, what make you of the Lambeth uncial? Once Laud's, they say? It has the final chapter which ye throw doubt upon. Whilst as for the construction which ye contend is late, I have an instance for ye in Polycarp. Besides, as I now remember, Grynæus in his *Orthodoxographa*——"

(*Get thee to thy skipping-rope, good reader. Nay, I too will e'en join thee, for the rector grows over-erudite.*)

"So, as I was saying," recapitulated the worthy soul, after five polemical minutes, "But, I beg your pardon!"

For his auditor had muttered: "*Oh, dear, next week!*"

The bold wind which had compelled the clergyman to shout his argument in breathless instalments had at the moment fallen quiet, and in the lull he caught the above disconcerting irrelevancy from his companion, whose attention he had imagined he was engrossing. As a gentleman Mr. Tomlyn was disposed to be courteously deaf to a remark which had no connection with his subject, and which was of the nature of an unconscious self-revelation. He paced a few steps in silence, mastering, as he hoped, every evidence of his surprise, but inwardly concerned for his friend.

His friend, however, was not to be outdone in politeness.

"I must ask thy excuse . . . it seems I was not giving thy argument just the attention . . . in fact . . . was thinking . . . much to trouble me of late."

Sad was the voice, sad and low again: there was no mistaking that note, the unconscious cry for help. Ignatius and Polycarp vanished; here, at the rector's elbow, stood a fellow-creature in need. The men turned as if moved by a common impulse, and retracing their steps to the East Gate came to a stand in a corner out of the wind. Tomlyn was thinking fast and hard. This amazing old fellow, was it possible? and after such a life! Something he knew of that life, its silent, underhanded kindnesses in his parish; but most of its dry, bleak, upland pastures were strange country to him. A bachelor himself, he could sympathise with a brother celibate and yet be almost incapable of conceiving an existence such as Hippisley's outside monastery walls. Woman had had no part in it. A sisterless lad, without girl cousins, little Phaniel

had grown up in an Eveless Eden, drab, quiet, and narrow, nor had ever tasted of the Tree of Knowledge. There had been no skipplings and kissings, blameless or otherwise, in his life, no sportive interludes provoked by mischievous blue eyes and rosy beckoning fingers. And now, all unaware, this gentle, kindly, pure old heart had taken a wound.

"Dear God! What an awful thing! This innocent, like some hermit of the woods, in sheer compassion, has lifted a witch over his threshold out of the storm and night. 'Twill kill him. . . . Is it possible that I can help?"

Now consider, I beseech you, the relations of these two old men. For the first fifteen years of their acquaintanceship they had regarded one another as the orthodox practitioner regards the homœopath, and as the Moderator of the Wee Frees regards the Scottish Primus. For five years a common interest and a growing appreciation of one another's scholarship had been drawing them together. Were their true selves ever to be revealed, their souls to touch?

Something must be risked: in fact, 'twas a big risk, the soldering or the severing of an irreplaceable friendship, no less. Tomlyn accepted that risk.

"Mr. Hippisley?"

"My friend?"

"How goes this with you?"

"But poorly, my friend."

The parson closed his eyes, shooting a prayer heavenward as he plunged. The other saw, understood, and submitted. Had a deputation of the Overseers of his Monthly Meeting come a-visiting him upon his conduct and intentions towards Susan, they, the accredited censors of his sect, would have found him marble. But this was an angel-guarded moment.

"Tell me all about it; yes, about her?"

Hippisley groaned. A tear trickled down the withered old nose and hung from its frosted tip. It might have been the wind, but a spring north-easter does not loosen the mouth, thought Tomlyn. "What! can it be as bad as this?"

Then Hippisley groaned again, and a hand went falteringly out and was taken. The impacted ice about the strong heart was breaking. This man, a stranger to close and equal human sympathy since his mother had kissed him and died so many years ago, was dumbly feeling for comfort in his trouble. Good God! what was coming? The rector braced himself to hear and to bear one more tragedy. The wind piped lamentably. A hungry lion roared in the Moat.

Yet it was no more than what he knew already, amplified a little, the pathetic story of desertion and poverty and the unrequited love of an injured woman's faithful heart.

"She doesn't even know for certain that the man is there. She has no hold upon him, no scrap of his handwriting. He may, nay, almost certainly will deny her if she ever finds him ; and what then is to become of her ? I have reasoned, represented : her one reply to it all is that the man is her husband. Now, we know what we know. And she leaves us next week—next week ! "

And this was all—positively all ! The man was unconscious of his self-revelation.

"It has taken hold of you strangely, my friend. Your health——? "

"Indeed yes. I take no joy in anything. My food tastes less to my mind . . . dry. I sleep brokenly. . . . And, what is new to me, my powers of concentration, of attention (as thou hast just seen, and as I grieve to think thou shouldst have had occasion to see), are weakening. I am elderly, but not so old. It cannot be that ? "

"No, I do not for a moment believe it is. You and I, my friend, are regular livers : we have expectation of health for years to come ; with reasonable care, you know. . . . But you must regulate your sympathies, or they will run away with you."

"Thou thinkest so ? But, who could withhold pity ? The child is so helpless ! So . . . young." The man was still but half awake, yet, seeing himself shimmeringly reflected in Tomlyn's eyes, as a sleep-walker might see himself in a glass, he stopped to consider the phenomenon.

"Have ye confided to the lady the way in which her—distresses and her—presence—er—affect ye, Mr. Hippisley ? "

"No, oh no ! It would only add to her trouble. But, indeed, I had a half-formed purpose of accompanying her."

"Nay, Hippisley, ye must not do that. I mean, I could not advise it."

"Eh ? How so ? Why ? " The somnambulist was rubbing his eyes and was now nearly awakened, the figure of himself in the mirror was still puzzling him, but was so recognisably himself that his position and divagations would presently be obvious to him.

"For the lady's sake, Hippisley, and your own peace of mind."

"Thou dost not mean to say. But I never thought. . . . It surely cannot . . . ? Impossible ! Oh no, really ! " Yet a heart-shaken conviction of the possibility of this very thing that he deprecated was oppressing his consciousness. His eyes opened widely for a moment and then closed tightly : the lips were indrawn and held, the nostrils quivered. Alas for the sleeper ! his eager heart full of sweet compassions, he

is pursuing some dimly realised form through a twilit, silent place of green boskage : she flits just out of reach nor turns her face : a rosy ear nestles amid dear, dark tendrils, a soft cheek, just seen, trembles with some unknown trouble, a tear slips down its damask rondure. His tongue is clogged, his feet hampered, but his outstretched arms can almost reach her. He would protect, defend, uphold—*Click !*—a curtain runs up, and with dazed, blinking eyes unused to the glare of a new and unwelcome day, he finds his vision fled, and himself—can it be ?—night-shirted and chilly (oh, the shame-scorch has yet to come) paddling bare-footed in the coffee-room amid the chairs of booted and coated strangers decorously surprised—a somnambulist taken in the act !

Reader, dost thou know the sensation of being caught out in a Wrong Thing : not merely suspected, but actually caught *flagrante delicto*, the stolen lollipops in thy very mouth, the purloined jam still gumming thy little larcenous fingers ? (we will assume that the dereliction was childish and long ago). Was this experience ever thine ? Then thou at least canst recall the breath-catching, tongue-parching, palsyng sense of shame which overcomes the culprit thus taken, when his, or her, universe seems all eyes before and behind, and each family portrait upon the wall turns accusing glances upon the misdemeanant.

Friend Hippisley for one moment felt thus. The dear, good soul, who had lived so upright a life, had had no experience of the kind since his almost babyhood. To deny, to repudiate, hardily to face-down proof was outside his character. He accepted this revelation of himself as the Message from The Most High, and the messenger as his friend, cruel as was the wound to pride dealt by his hand.

“As bad as that ?” muttered the rector, watching this visible distress, and as yet unaware of the wholly subjective struggles of which it was the outward expression. “She knows, I suppose ?”

“That I pity her ? I cannot say.”

“‘Pity’ ? Hippisley, this goes beyond pity ; ’tis——”

“No, surely ! What art thou saying ? Yet, I do not know, for I never——”

“No ? What, ye have *never* ? Sir, ’tis amazing, but I take your word for it ; but ye are in for it now. Trust me, we see some life, we parsons, and I too, alack—and all ! am just a man”—a long shuddering sigh, which might partly have been the cold wind, which both had forgotten : it had worked round to them in their shelter. “Ye are not alone in this, my friend, by any means. And now, how stands it with ye ?”

“ Oh, *what* shall I say ? ”

“ As little, or as much as ye will. I, too, remember——”

So out it came, the pitifullest stuff, and surely the most innocent of any story of human passion. He had learned to listen for the closing and opening of the attic door. . . . Could tell her foot upon the floors overhead and upon the stair. Her voice raised in some brief snatch of song below at the wash-tub caught his breath, tugged at his heart-strings. No more ! It had begun, he verily believed, with the child darning his stockings.

Tomlyn, pinching a pursed lip, heard and marvelled at any human being walking so foul a world with feet so little sullied. 'Twas the passion of a boy for some beautiful, grave, sorrow-stricken lady old enough to have been his mother. As clean, as mad, and ten times as dangerous.

Yes, dangerous. The patient had got a name for his complaint, and was conscious. Nature would be putting in a claim to its rights.

“ It is but for a week—a week ! ” murmured poor Hippisley, brokenly.

“ I must keep them apart for the time as much as may be,” thought the rector. “ Ye need change of thought, my friend. What say ye to accompanying me to Lambeth to see that uncial for yourself ?—aye, and they have a hagiography there, an ordinary *Acts of St. Thomas of Canterbury* in fourteenth-century script, with something beneath which seems to me worth attention. Shall I call for ye this afternoon ? ”

“ Friend Tomlyn, thou hast been very good to me ; hast helped me,” said the other, thinking his own thoughts still. “ I am somewhat shaken in myself and would know where I stand. Tell me, as man to man ; thinkest thou that the Almighty condemns me in this ? ”

“ In that ye began like a Samaritan and have ended as a man ? Indeed I do think nothing of the sort of Him. Neither do I condemn ye, Hippisley : go in peace. And may God Almighty pardon us both.”

They had stood long enough in the wind for both of them to have taken colds which neither could account for later, and parted in much friendship, staunch Protestants both, and equally unaware that they had participated in auricular confession, and that one had pronounced and the other accepted absolution.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEVERING STRAND

THE ice below bridge was loosening fast now, and Furley was nigh ready for sea.

During the ten days which yet remained to him, Hippisley, who had hitherto in his heart of hearts refused to believe in his young guest's departure, accepted the event, and bent himself to make that departure as pleasant to her as he might.

He saw but little of her, nor ever trusted himself alone in her company ; but of her comfort during the voyage, and of her welfare and safety at the end of it, and of her possible return, he thought both by night and by day.

" This crew of thine, Thomas—— ? "

" A passable, stiddy lot, seemin'ly, Phaniel Hippisley, sir, all on 'em being Members of the Society of Friends, saving the cook, who be a professor of all religions, and the boy, what have none. But I lives in hopes of basting a little of the right sort into him atween Gravesend and Europa Point, God willing."

" And thou hast confidence in this mate of thine—I know nothing of him—Zabulon Sweetapple—— ? "

" Useful, just useful ; I reckons we can dew with him. I knawn him years back. He've some navigation about him, which is apt to come in handy on the high seas. Likewise some skill in physic and yarbs (I b'lieves in yarb-tea, myself). Then, he's a perfessed bone-setter, and there's sense in that aboardship ; for I've sin myself——" Furley related a gruesome experience of injuries and home-spun First Aid : " But he sorter died, all the same," he concluded, " so this here Anointer-man might chance upon a job this v'yage, please God. He bain't azackly One of Us, as you might say, but talks Scripture surprisin'."

" I should like to make the man's acquaintance."

" Thee'll not do it to-day, I'm thinking, for he be off on

a job of his own. Comes to me day afore yesterday and arsts me to spare him till to-night as is—seemed to make out as 'twas the eend of the Age, and Mile-Endium was overdue, and that he must be there."

"Where?" asked Hippisley with interest.

"Mile End, to be sure. He'd figured it out proper; showed me sech a string o' figures and kalkilations as nigh turned me half silly. His Lord was a-coming and he must be on the spot for to meet Him in the air and what not. 'Are you often took so?' sez I. 'Never at sea,' sez he. 'That's lucky,' sez I, 'and we'll consider ourselves at sea now.' 'But we ain't east o' Gravesend yet,' sez he, and made out as he'd prewved his kalkilations this time so as they was bound to come right. Now there's no answerin' a chap like that in port, so I gives 'um the tew days orf. . . . Hullo, why here a-be, back afore his time!"

A big, blue-coated man in breeches and cocked hat was coming over the side; his buckled shoes and brass buttons gave him a more commanderish appearance than did the frock to which Furley, in his Quaker zeal for simplicity, still adhered since his promotion to the poop. "Come aboard, sir," growled the newcomer surlily, and was going below to change when his skipper stayed him.

"Here's thy owner, Zabulon, Phanuel Hip'sl'y, as thee've heerd me tell about. Friend Hip'sl'y, this here be Zabulon Sweetapple, mate o' thy ship. And oh, by the by, Zabulon, how went that job o' thine at Mile End?"

The mate's broad red face darkened. "If there's one thing as s'prises me more'n another, 'tis that some folkse can't mind *their own business*."

"And about the young person's cabin accommodation, Thomas?" said Hippisley, as the mate ducked under the after-deck.

"There be four locker-bunks below—one for she, one for he, and t'other two for me and my charts. See? Ah, yah, and I've stowed them cases o' stores as thee've sent aboard for her; quite a nicetish property—and——"

"Not at all. But there is a point I must settle with thee, and as well now as any time. Below will be best." They sought the cabin.

"I think it probable that Susan Tighe will fail of finding her husband at Gibraltar, Thomas, or, finding him, may hear her marriage and herself repudiated."

"My view tew," assented the captain.

"In which case I desire thee to do thy utmost to bring her back to us again."

"Yigh, yigh; that's all werry well, Friend Hip'sl'y, but

what if she refuges for to come? Gals be gals; and if so be as her man be there, 'tis odds as she'll stick and chance it."

"Poor things, are they so?" murmured Hippisley with commiseration for the weakness of his sister woman born of recent experiences, and a newly-gained knowledge of the soft places in his own heart. "Well, Thomas, I must trust to thy judgement. Which brings me to this; say she proves deaf to thy persuasion and declines to return, she must not be left without means. A little money—she will need it."

"She will that, poor soul; 'tis the root of all evil, but a gal alone in the world is none the worse for a bit off the end of it. 'Tis all the same as liquorice: a suck be a comfort to the throat; tew much be bad for ye."

But the owner was untying the complicated knots of a small and weighty parcel which he had hitherto entrusted to no handling but his own. "No . . . she must not be left without means. . . . Here are three hundred pounds, Thomas."

"A sight tew much, friend."

"I differ from thee. Here are three hundred pounds, I say, or thereabouts (we will tell it presently), which I place in thy hands to leave in hers at parting, if thou hast to part with her."

"But I hope for better things."

As he spoke, the brown oak fixture-table was growing opulent with rows of moidores, demi-moidores, and doubloons (current coin of the realm an it please you), rolls of Spanish pillar-dollars (pieces of eight), too, upon which the cretinous profile of the Bourbon was partially defaced by the warranty-mark of the Bank of England, a superimposed stamp of the royal features of King George within an escutcheon. There were millions—actual, not rhetorical—of such in circulation, the prize-money of Anson's blue-jackets, the plunder of the privateers, stout Woodes Rogers and others. When a tall galleon struck, or a town was held to ransom, the victors made haste to divide the specie. By rights, no doubt, the cases should have gone to a prize-court for adjudication, and the bullion to the royal mint—then within the walls of the Tower of London—but such were the peculations and delays of these departments that a wise man troubled them as little as might be, and this demimonde coinage, bearing the superscriptions of the Bank, or of some well-known firm, passed freely, not legal tender, maybe, but customary, and for foreign trade as good as any.

Furley squared his elbows and knit his bushy brows for the telling; the owner peeped half shyly into the little dark

locker-bunk reserved for the lady, and for the first time realised the tightness and closeness of sea-quarters.

“Will she have room enough here, thinkest thou, Thomas?”

“Forty-five, forty-six. ‘Room enow?’ Why, sartinly she will—there be room enow for *me* . . . Forty-seven—hi! a dud crown here!” He had driven a strong yellow dog-tooth through the layer of silver covering a base-metal core. There were many such fabrications afloat, for no jury would hang a man for forging the image and superscription of a Most Catholic Majesty with whom Protestant King George was at loggerheads.

“Bad, is it? Tut, tut, and has been stamped by the City itself. Very careless; but I’ll exchange with thee.” He drew another from his fob and tossed the other through the stern window. “I wish,” said he, “I wish she may be comfortable—I somehow cannot think it.”

And the day dawned, the inevitable day. Susan, loaded with more than she could possibly require, was embraced by the weeping Jemima at the Tower stairs; Jasper, the broad, snuffy lip none too steady, hovering in the background, a sorrowful little figure of mute sympathy. The rector was there too, having met the party on Tower Hill by—accident. He would dissuade his old friend from going down river in the wherry, or accompany him if persuasions failed. There should be no weakness at the last.

Together they saw the child on board; saw too the brig’s head-sails fill, and watched her take the ebb and fade away down the reach on her way to Sheerness, whence a strong escort would guard the East Coast convoy as far as its rendezvous at Falmouth.

And the wherry with the two old men in its stern-sheets came slowly up-river again, against wind and tide; slowly and very sorrowfully, for light and youth and a sweet young spirit had passed out of their lives. Susan was gone.

This is the worst of entertaining angels. The white creature folds its wings and deigns to inhabit with us for a season, and, because of it, there broods a blessing upon the house, and peace is in all our borders. Like Israel of old, we have light in our dwelling. The very bow-pots are full of bloom, and there is fragrance from attic to basement.

And then, too soon, we find that our heavenly visitant is ours for a visit only, has a life to live elsewhere, and business upon those white hands; and one morning the bed is cold and vacant, the lattice wide, and the Bird of God is gone!

Possibly Phaniel Hippisley was thinking such thoughts as these, whilst the watermen lay to their oars, and the running

ebb rattled under the wherry's bows. Gloomy and dull would be his rooms in Catherine Court without her, those rooms where the blacks settled upon his pillow as he slept, and upon the page as he read. He had not noticed them before her coming, but now—the blacks seemed falling upon his heart.

His lips moved with soundless fragments of the *Alkestis*. The dim old eyes swam with water that was not due to the warm west wind they were meeting. They overlooked the wharves and the tiers of shipping and the lighters running down with the brown current, but saw only a little face that they would see thus and no otherwise until they closed in death.

“Old man's love, it burneth to the bone.”

The rector watched his man in a wise silence.

And, now, are you a-weary of my twin fogeys? And is this the place to drop them out of my story? The old, as we know, must go; *vixerunt*—they have lived their lives; the horse is at the door for them. Youth is hot, and impatient, and will be served.

And yet, and yet, for the life of me I cannot find it in my heart to treat the twain as supers and mere upholstery. They were so very real to themselves (and to the God who made them). Even the elderly and the unpicturesque have their rights, and with your leave, or without it, I will round off my friends' stories as well as I may, and those who want to be skipping shall betake them to their ropes and be welcome. It shall not run to more than a page.

For, look you, the Rev. Eustace Tomlyn came out well, and it behoves to tell how that he, minded to provide a distraction for the brooding heart of his friend, besought his judgement upon a certain MS. in the library of Lambeth Palace, and got it. Also how this MS. grew to be MSS. and a widening circle of interest. Item, how the twain got access to a certain neglected muniment chamber heaped with the fusty illegibility of the southern Province, “difficult to read, impossible to understand, and disgusting to handle,” yellow bundles of returns, the dust thick upon their greasy upper surfaces, but fair and creamy within. It was here that Hippisley descried those faint gray lines of half-erased Greek cursive crossing and underlying the dog Latin of some long-dead archdeacon, a trouvaille clean overlooked by generations of snuffy, non-resident, sinecure librarians, whose existence, like Porson's in similar circumstances, could be inferred from their receipts for salary, never by services rendered. Time

would fail me to tell how this pair of strangely matched yoke-fellows spent delightful years at this business, absorbed, secretive, glanced at askance by Quakerism upon the one hand and orthodoxy upon the other, until their joint *Thesaurus* saw the light, and commentators caught sudden breaths of wonder at the two old scholars, who had recovered three lost epistles of St. Mileto of Sardis, and an extraordinarily early and perfectly spurious Gospel, attributing itself to Thomas the Twin, but bewraying the hand of Marcion. For this and more I refer you to the palæographers. But for the inner life of the two you must come to me. By gradual degrees, or rather by a series of small plunges, the men found themselves in closer social contact. 'Twas highly unprofessional upon both their parts, but what would you? Upon the score of mere convenience, the rector in the middle of a stiff piece of exegesis must sup with the dissenter at No. 6; whilst the Quaker learned his way up the steep staircase of St. Olave's rectory at the west end of the church. (No. 8, Hart Street, to-day, and let out as offices, a staircase worth visiting, for every baluster and newell is delightfully and quaintly twisty.)

I would have you then conceive them, deep in this business (a curate running the parish, and Jasper Tutty, assisted by a promising nephew, husbanding the brigs of the Hippisley fleet), wholly and utterly absorbed, collating, deciphering, eking out, reading in, recovering, suggesting (oh, the delights of it!) cheek by jowl, in perfect amity; the occasional incidence of a church-rate troubling the distraining rector much, and the distrained-upon victim not at all, and the former sorrowing over the final doom of his unbaptized friend, who, for his part, faced the prospect with perfect equanimity.

And there we may leave them both. God bless them. Amen!

BOOK V

THE CHANCES OF THE SEA

CHAPTER I

TERTIUM QUID

I WOULD have you see Falmouth Harbour, not as it lies to-day, empty save for a few hulks, and its own quay-punts, and, it may be, a rare nitrate barque or a Californian four-master with wheat put in for orders, but Falmouth at the beginning of its great days, at the oncoming of the epic cycle of the French wars, which gave to its land-locked creeks their first importance as a western rendezvous for England's outgoing commerce.

Conjure up Falmouth then, as it was in the early June of 1779, when the second great Mediterranean convoy of the year, a fleet of two hundred sail, lay folded like sheep within the green, wooded headlands awaiting a shift of wind, whilst butcher-boats and tailor-boats, bread-boats and water-boats did good business, and every tradesman between Penrhyn and Market-strand, Flushing and St. Mawes was reaping a golden harvest.

Conceive that the soft, warm, overcast, southerly weather, which has tied the fleet up for weeks, has backed to a brisk northerly breeze, and that the captain of the frigate in charge, H.M.S. *Paladin*, impatient to be gone, lies off the Black Rock with his fore-topsail aback, firing signal guns to quicken the movements of slow, bluff-bowed, scuppers-awash merchantmen, whose masters, more weather-wise than their commodore, and confident of the falling of a curtain of channel-fog, are in many cases ashore.

Bang! bang! go those blank charges; Captain Wynyard will take no denials; his ancillary gun-brigs *Snorter* and *Hawk* are enforcing his orders; landing-parties of blue-

jackets are patrolling Main Street, their officers push into back snuggeries, and old cronies enjoying a parting rummer are hectored and sent about their business by little rascal middies without a hair upon their chins. The blue peter flutters everywhere, the guardship flies more bunting than any merchant jack can possibly read unless he shall have at some time served his king as yeoman of the signals. Hence there is much hasty manning of boats at the Green Bank, takings aboard of belated washing, some shedding of tears, too, and tender farewells, but more drinkings of healths, especially at Pendennis, where the gentlemen of the garrison mess, after a wet night of it, according to the custom of their day and service, are for giving a tipsy send-off to the officers sailing with the reliefs for Gibraltar.

The anchorage is vocal to the plaintive chanties of labouring jacks up-hauling heavy gaffs or getting home their cables to the clank of windlass pawls. The tide has turned, the ebb begins to carry seaward the floating weed, cables grow right ahead, stocks are awash; over two hundred brigs, snows, sloops, and barques are on the move, when, justifying the growls of old channel pilots, the sun silvers, the day dims, puff after puff of down-driving flock intervenes between ship and ship, marks glimmer for a moment or two and go out. The sun, but now a ball of glistering silver, just tolerable, turns to a plaque of Spanish lustre, then to a disc of ruby, then mere copper, whilst the water runs pewter, lead, dross of lead. Impalpable whiteness spreads, portending disaster, a channel-fog has fallen upon the convoy in narrow waters, whilst the one half has hardly gotten steerage-way upon it, and the other is still getting its anchors.

Too late, the commodore saw his mistake, no signals would avail him; his too peremptory orders had been obeyed, or would be obeyed, for no weak-handed merchantman wants to be the laggard of his convoy, the lame duck, hull-down to windward, that is plucked by the Cherbourg *chasse-marée*. Dangerous was the huddle of unhandy craft in the gut of the harbour mouth, nor was it so safe farther up, where the *Mary of Yarmouth* lay still at her moorings off St. Mawes hard, well inshore, but not so wholly out of the fairway that a half-drunk master who had lost his marks might not find her.

So thought Mr. Sweetapple and looked his question. The skipper nodded and walked aft to his station. "Man the windlass!" said the mate, taking the forecastle.

Susan from the poop heard the unmelodious grunting of the hands timing their efforts to the accented words of a jaunty old refrain,

“ Oh, *don't* ye sneer at a sailor-lad though his *for-tune* may be *low*,
For *all* my fancy *dwells* on Nancy, and I'll sing *yo*, heave *yo*,
My lads, and I'll sing *yo*, heave, *yo* ! ”

Mr. Sweetapple rolled it out in a rich, rough, gravy-beef voice : his Quaker jacks joined in at the salient points with perfunctory, shamefaced groans, as though resenting the omission of William Penn, a voluminous author, and himself the son of an admiral, to provide suitable chanties for the needs of his seafaring followers.

“ This here ain't Gracious Street, Susan, ma'am ; and, arter all, there beent no sin in it,” was the master's excuse for his company's unquakerly dereliction.

A minute or two later he had weightier matters for thought, his “ departure ” to wit, as the seaman calls his last sight of land, and with corrugated brows took silent note of his exact position and fell again, as his headsails filled and drew, to exploring the fog which drove down harbour with him, conceding him capricious glimpses of other craft. Drab silhouettes of shipping loomed up out of its bosom from King Harry Passage and Penrhyn Roads and passed from sight again. But not from hearing ; there, broad upon his star-board bow, some vigorous hailing was going on and not a little swearing, which a dull, pounding crash explained if it failed to justify. A transport brig, under a master new to these waters, had fallen athwart the hawse of a little snow running free ; both jib-booms had gone, both foretop-masts had followed, and the craft, still foul, had taken ground under Pendennis. The fog which had wrought the mischief thinned for a moment as though to show its handiwork, and then closed gauzy curtains around the strands.

“ What ships be they ? ” asked the master. The helmsman did not know, and Mr. Sweetapple, who did, was forward by the knightheads, invisible but audible, for an anxious man was Mr. Sweetapple that tide, no longer the *choregos* of an untuneful watch, but bull-voiced, remonstrant, minatory, yea, profane.

“ Keep her away ! Port, sir, for the love o' Gawd ! ” The channel was narrowish for this sort of thing, especially with a following crowd of invisible craft. “ Back-water, you fool row-boat, there ; d'ye want to be run down ? Yes—no—take yer ch'ice and go to the devil ! ” (This in response to questions from the water, some crabber in fear for his pots, as Furley opined.) Then the mate, still bawling injurious observations at some nameless offender against the courtesies of navigation, a block of darker fog, itself unpleasantly vocal, suddenly grew shrill. “ *Let her come up a bit ! Ahoy, there !*

Where the mischief——? ” Furley flung his weight upon the tiller-tackle—too late ; a second block of grayness, swiftly growing in definition, loomed up, delivering broadsides of expletives, and was aboard him before the *Mary* had obeyed her helm. Followed a long, shuddering, grinding impact ; strange, angry voices mingled with the crackling of the faggot-fenders which Furley had providently hung overside ; strange red faces, open-mouthed and vociferous, peered from the fog alongside. Everything was let go, and the two little vessels, luckily under easy canvas, lay for a minute in most unaffectionate contact, both their companies hard at it with sweep-heads and spare booms to pole them clear.

It was during the warmth of this business that a singular thing befell ; for now, whilst the master and all hands, save the impassive helmsman, were noisily busy, came again that hail from the water astern, and then the thump of a shipped oar and two voices in converse beneath the brig’s counter.

“ ’Tis the gentleman’s ship, sure enough, I tell ’ee ; the *M, A, R, Y*—Aw, yess——”

“ But——”

“ Tell’ee ’tis, then ; what else ? You’m a fule as can’t read. D’ee think to teach me—you, as can’t tell a cockstag from a mebbish ? Now, captain, show a leg and lay hold o’ something ! ”

And with that, and some scraping alongside, a shoreboat was hooked on to the port main-channels whilst a tall fellow, heavily cloaked in the military mode, silent, deliberate, and clumsy, got himself over the gunwale into the ship’s waist. The visitor passed a hand across his face, stared about him but said never a word, then felt in his fob, and, lurching to the ship’s rail, leaned over, rating his boatmen for thieves. They, without replying, expeditiously cast off, thrust astern, and were gone, swallowed up bodily by the fog. No sailors these, but harbour crimps turned longshoremen for the occasion ; rogues in grain, and at home, by their Cornish speech.

Their fare and dupe patted an empty fob, swearing softly as a man talks in his sleep. He had a thick tongue. Sue from her station upon the poop could see the upper part of his figure. He seemed both young and out of sorts, and had a lost air. She disliked and yet pitied him. Presently, recognizing that his purse was gone, and that he was wasting his time, he turned from the gunwale and made his way aft with dull, fixed eyes that disregarded the labouring backs of the watch upon the other side of the main-hatch.

“ Tonal, Tonal, I say ; come here, ye donnert fule ! Noo, where the teffle iss Tonal ? ” At this point he raised his eyes and found himself face to face with Sue. “ A leddy on board ;

"I am tammed!" he whispered; then aloud, "Ma'am, yer pairdon's begged. . . . Hae ye sin ma batman?"

It was at this juncture, and before Susan could ask the stranger what he meant or required, that the consenting efforts of two ships' companies had got their vessels clear, and the brig fell away before the wind. The changed motion must have affected the young gentleman's equilibrium, for he staggered, buckling at the knees, made a snatch at the lady's outstretched hand, and with its assistance took a seat upon the deck with the solemnity and deliberation of the Lord Chancellor taking the woolsack.

"Who are you? What is the matter with him? Do I know you, sir?" asked the startled girl, fast by her fingertips, and puzzled as well by the helpless absurdity of the youth's position as by a certain elusive familiarity in his features.

"C-C-Chish-holm, ma'am, of the C-Chisholms o' Kinloch Shin. En-Enshign in ta 73rd, at your service: and, py your leave, ma'am—fou."

Carrying the finger-tips reverently to his lips before releasing them, the lad went through the motions of a military salute, nodded heavily, closed lack-lustre eyes, leaned his head against the rail at the break of the poop and—slept.

"'Tis a soldier-orficer as have lorst his ship, ma'am, and be somethin' overtaken," said the steersman.

"Norratall, q-qui' shober: s-sleepy, thashall," corrected the gentleman politely, opening one watery eye and closing it again with a gentle murmur of "K-King's health—send-off—friens'—guid friens'."

"Friends, indeed! What wicked foolishness!—and you, sir, so young!" exclaimed Susan indignantly, taking in the situation and vexed at having spent her sympathy upon intoxication.

Ridiculously relaxed, unseasonably somnolent, the new arrival reposed, and it was in this condition that Furley presently discovered him, bemused but loyal, able indeed to reply to each and every inquiry with the formula: "Ta King. Cot pless him!" His name had become a matter of conjecture; his regiment, and, what was more to the purpose, the name of the transport in which he berthed, were for the time irrecoverable.

What an admirable thing is knowledge of the world in a saint! Furley was a man who had seen too much of life to be easily surprised at any manifestation of human frailty. Taking the youth in with half an eye, he bade roll him in a spare staysail and lay him along in the lee waist-scuppers with an oakum boat-fender under his head, "For," said he, "when a be

sober enough to put a name to his ship 'twill be time enough to talk o' puttin' him aboard. Meanwhile thee'd best keep clear of him, Miss Tighe, ma'am, so to speak."

Sue assenting, spent the rest of the day at her knitting beneath the taffrail, entertained by the sober discourse of a Quaker steersman, who, knowing the coast by heart, expounded to the lady passenger by word of mouth the succession of headlands: Pennance, Rosemullion, Helford River, Black Head, the Manacles, and the Lizard, which she would have seen had this channel-fog but lifted.

But the girl's thoughts were busy with that foolish young man in the staysail: somewhere, surely, had she seen that nose. But where? So the day wore.

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The delicious brief midsummer twilight drew on; the northerly wind had overcome its competitor; the convoy had run out of the fog, and, heading south-west with half a breeze abaft the beam, was running free. They had lost the land: it was Sue's first experience of open sea. Here were two hundred sail travelling on into the gates of the sunset over a steel-blue planisphere. The weather was glorious, the water alongside clean and wine-dark—a new element to the girl used for long weeks on shipboard to the yellow Thames and the faint green opacity of the Channel. They were off at last, a mighty company; every hour of this breeze bore her nearer to where she would be; a wife she was, and would find her husband yet. She could have sung; all should be explained, not pardoned: she would not blame him, but circumstances. She had paused in her walk at the break of the poop and, staying herself against the gentle pitching of the brig, with her hands upon the oaken rail, stood thus enjoying the triumph of the dying day, humming snatches of old songs, brimful of the thoughts of youth, which are long, long thoughts, and in most of us find no expression, nor found any in Sue, unless one counts the tints and contours of a woman's unconscious beauty, the gleam of white teeth through parted lips, the tiny movements of nostrils drinking in the salted breeze, the restrained dance-steps of impatient feet, the flutter of an escaped tress around the pink shell of a rosy ear.

Life and love were her only modes of expression, and, alack, through no fault of hers, both, ere her twentieth year, were in jeopardy of shipwreck.

She had forgotten for an hour or two past the existence of that unbidden guest: his presence was recalled to her by the stirring of the canvas under which he lay: a hand appeared; the man was awaking: the lady desired to see no more, and

returned to her end of the deck. But she was not to escape him; the stranger's personality pursued her still; the skipper was mounting the companion with a troubled visage, handling the wig from which, for the second time that day, he had torn a curl.

"Oh, Thomas Furley, do let the poor thing off! It will never see the end of the voyage at this rate. I had better begin a woollen night-cap for thee at once."

"Well, well, I dew fare to think as thee'd best, my dear, for as things frame aboard this hare brig, the poor scratch'll not last me acrost the Bay, let alone to Gib. Who'd a-thought as ewents would have tarded out that stoopid? Here's this orficer-boy sober enough to give an account of hisself. Sims he carries the King's colour in the 73rd, Lord M'Leod's Regiment. (Highlanders they be, so he say; rum company for Us, eh?) He sim naterally anxious to rejine his mess, likewise for to set eyes upon his kit. Now, heart alive, what be I to dew with him?" The speaker's brow wrinkled with perplexities as yet unshared by Sue; his hands fingered the mutilated wig, turning it between them—another curl was evidently in danger. Sue took it from him.

"Nay, but what prevents you from signalling to his ship and setting him on board her?"

"A nateral question for a woman, Miss Tighe, ma'am—my dear, I'd say; but it sims as his ship is one o' the tew as took the ground under Pendennis, an' he bein' drunk, and his boatmen as bad or wuss, didn't see no difference atween the tew *Marys*. 'All in the fambly,' no doubt they says; but it comes to this, there be his ship hard and fast (onless they've towed her up-harbour by this), and here be we with this on-fortnit young friend chucked aboard us jest as he stand. He've bin and gone and lorst ivry mortal thing in this blessed world: his purse, his company, his commission, his kit, his weapons (better without them, in my opinion, but there!). Fact, here we've got him on our hands without a stitch o' travelling linen, nor so much as a hair-brush nor a handkercher."

Sue's clear laugh might have been heard in the fore-castle. "Oh, if that is all, he will not suffer long. Think of the rolls of longcloth which good Mr. Hippisley sent on board for me. Handkerchiefs, indeed? If one of you can take his measurements, I'll fit him out from top to toe in a week, Mr. Furley."

"Bless thy kind heart, but that's as the weather allows, Miss Susan, ma'am; not but what I sim to fare to think as thee'd manage somehow, for I niver see tailor ashore to match thee with the needle. But, meantime, where are we to berth

the young gen'lman? Nights is warm at this time o' year——"

"Oh, but you cannot let him lie on deck, sir, nor berth forward with the sailors—they would not like it; and I think you said in the Downs the forecastle was very full. Why not clear out the spare locker next to Mr. Sweetapple?"

"And over agin thee? 'Tis closeish stowage, Susan, my gal. . . . Thee are sure thee won't object?"

"I? Why? I am a married woman. And, beside, what else is to be done? 'Tis but for a few days at most."

But it was for more. To begin with, neither the frigate nor either of the gun-brigs—the only possible craft to which this derelict could be made over—took notice of the brig's waft, and by the end of the week the young stranger was too grateful, too comfortable, and upon too friendly terms with his hosts, for the idea of a transfer to be entertained by either of the parties to the subsisting arrangement.

"Ye ken, Mester Furley, that a certain ceremony prevails at a regimental mess, and that a shentleman pro-jeckit intill the midst of pairfect strangers (Southrons, forbye; some of them aiblins officers' leddies), wanting baith siller and uniform, would be subjeckit to inconveniences from the first, and might hae his deeficulties in presairvin' the status of his rank and gentrice—so, ef ye can pit up wi' ma pree-sence, and the young leddy disna objec'——"

It appeared that the young lady did not object. The irregularity of the young gentleman's first introduction, and other matters, were tacitly overlooked, or admonished by a word when occasion offered, and never again referred to. The indulgence which our working classes still extend to intoxication was granted by all classes less than a century since to what was then considered a manly foible. Susan frowned, pitied, and pardoned.

In the matter of his accommodation she declined absolutely to be considered, or to accept the post of referee. "I am a beggar myself, sir, an object of our good Mr. Furley's charity: yes, and like you, in the King's service (strange that two of us should be dependent upon the goodness of these kind people). I am the wife of Major Tighe. D'ye happen to have met my husband?"

Ensign Chisholm had already learned from the skipper as much of the lady's circumstances as would put him upon his guard: he asked no questions; he did not know the Major, but found a willingness within him to make the acquaintance of the Major's wife. He was very young, ardent and honourable; an unspoiled youth of a poor ancient stock of Highland gentry, sensitive, reticent, hardy, and proud. His barrack

experiences at Hounslow and Pendennis had disgusted his native virtue; he welcomed this return to a godly society and to language and living as clean as the sea-wind. This lady brought near to his fancy the forms of bonny sisters of his own in the far-away north, where the misty, gray mountains crowd in around the head of Loch Shin. But there was more than mere femininity in question; her face puzzled him.

And his her. It was neither his youth, nor his sex, nor the general resemblance of his small personal traits to the ways of her brother Draycott (whose inattention to her letter still grieved and surprised her), but her memory was tantalised by a more particular likeness in this young Scot to an indefinite image of an unlocalised haunting entity whom she had encountered elsewhere.

One day light broke. The young people were sitting within earshot of the helmsman; Susan, turning a burning face toward the youth, said hurriedly and low: "I trust ye will permit me to return your guinea, Mr. Chisholm."

CHAPTER II

AT SEA

So, in the lengthening days of that delaying spring of 1779, the girl sailed away upon her life's adventure. We will neither overrate nor minimise it; women have done as much for love before and since, and to eyes accustomed to importunate maps and the solicitations of the organisers of Mediterranean cruises, to which all things in the way of foreign travel are summed up in a booklet of coupons, a run out to the Rock may seem a simple affair. But things have changed mightily during the past hundred and thirty years, and that secular contraction of the globe's surface, which they tell us is ever in progress, must surely have accelerated, bringing places surprisingly near, which were then remote and tediously difficult of access.

Moreover, 'twas war-time: and who to-day can give their proper value to the words? To us, the sheltered people, war is merely something distant, temporary, and disagreeable; a fuss in the papers, a nuisance to be abated by the proper authorities; at worst, a disease under control, with convalescence and its compensations already in sight. That hostilities should touch Us, should endanger anything We really value (nearer than some remote and troublesome colony, say), should restrict the usual supplies, delay the Indian mails, or limit our continental tours, is outside our experience and needs a resolute effort of the imagination to bring within focus.

But to those ancestors and ancestresses of ours, one's grandfathers' grandparents, who jump so close to the eye and grow so vividly human and real when a forgotten bundle of yellow letters is untied, and the long-dead hearts are set beating once more and their long-silent voices awaken—to these, I say, *War-time* had its definite and particular significance. This war of the year 1779 was no affair of rectification of frontiers, no punitive expedition, nor reconnaissance in force. It was not distant at all, but quite close,

and threatening to be closer. Paul Jones ("The Pirate") had hovered for months off the western coasts making prizes, had even burnt the shipping in Whitehaven (a place of consequence then, with a West Indian fleet of its own). Nor had any one found time or courage to interfere with him; our admirals, Keppel and his second-in-command, having quarrelled and stood their trials, found more serious matters to occupy their valorous attentions than the integrity of our shores. A touch of the Summer Palace this; but there was no lack of *chinoiserie* in the management of our affairs at the moment. King George, having insisted too stiffly upon his pound of tea, had aroused the spirit of the Bostonians, to whom other colonists had rallied, and now, the mutinous Madras Council having furnished her with valid excuse, France was coming into it, dragging Spain at her heels. Neither was keen, both were rotten, and revolution near; with the Spaniard especially was no chivalrous alacrity; his minister, whilst discussing the terms of alliance, "quivered in every limb and could scarce articulate." Nathless, we had plenty upon our backs in 1779.

And now for a racial touch. Englishmen, who were so deadly sick of the American muddle, which had degenerated into Indian massacres, diversified by ludicrous blundering (a certain Captain French had just surrendered four armed schooners and his entire force of a hundred men to a lieutenant and four privates who had gravely represented themselves as bringing the summons of an irresistible army)—our countrymen, I say, who would enlist upon no terms for America, took the shilling by the thousand to "fight the French," and poor King George became almost popular again. Verily, we are the people.

Truly, this was no little war. All four combatants were exhausted before it really began. Those revolting Englishmen across "the herring-pond"* were so nearly humbled that they, who had drawn the sword rather than pay a doit of interest upon debt incurred in their own defence against these Frenchmen, were supplicating young King Louis graciously to assume the *Protectorate* of America—and advance them a little ready money. Oh, my brothers, my brothers!

Folly, indecision, and mixed motives all round—so much we can descry; also that this bloody business will go burrowing on like a cancer, affecting far distant members; Sugar Islands, of course, will exchange hands; there will be killing on African rivers; in Hyderabad there shall be ruin and

* How modern and preventable does the dispute seem when one comes upon the colloquialism in a business letter of that day!

destruction, and (touching us more closely) the British Channel shall become such a risk for shipping that much London tonnage shall go north-about by way of the Orkneys, and all valuables from the East shall be landed at Bristol, or at Gloucester, be carted over the Cotswolds to Lechlade, and so down to London in barge by way of Oxford and Maidenhead. (Does this appeal to the modern mind?)

Incidentally an allied fleet shall sweep the Channel and coop up ours at Spithead, and it shall be touch-and-go with us whether we shall not be invaded at last.

But none of these happenings shall come into our story; merely shall this item closely affect us, that Spain, yearning to recover her southern fortress, shall bind France and herself by a solemn pact "neither to consent to peace, truce, nor suspension of hostilities until Gibraltar be surrendered."

And, as we know, it is to this particular focus of the war, now fanned to flame, that our Susan is hastening as fast as Friend Hippisley's brig and Thomas Furley's seamanship may carry her.

Thus the voyage began. I would have you realise not only the perspective but the intimate circumstance of it, make you see—but shall probably fail in my endeavour—the tininess of the ship, the straitness of that small, dark cabin where Sue must sit in heavy weather with nothing to amuse her but her knitting; for the brig rolled so abominably that, apart from the smell of bilge-water, there was no holding such heavy books as the only two upon Master Furley's shelf, a big Bible, and a smaller volume, a *Compleat Modern Navigator's Tutor*, by Joshua Kelly of Broad Street, Wapping, at Wapping New Stairs, 1720. There was, indeed, the master's private sea-clock, a hanging sand-glass, which the girl took under her charge and turned end for end at three-hour intervals. She could empty and repack her chest, too, wondering, smiling, and almost weeping over the prodigal kindness and minute forethought of her host. The quantity, variety, and solid worth of the outfit took her breath at her first discovery of its presence on board, and her realisation that everything within that substantially built box, with its rope-becket at either end, and her name painted upon its lid, was her very own. The thing was five times the size of her hair trunk (redeemed for her by Jasper Tutty on the morrow of her rescue). The child had never possessed so much clothing before in her life, and, marvel of marvels, the sizes and the fitting were admirable. Surely the hand of Jemima was in this, her darling Jemima, Jemima of the many-wrinkled, cap-encircled, homely face; much-experienced, tireless in silent kindnesses, just such a countenance as Vader

Helst would have put upon canvas ; albeit Sue had never heard of Vader Helst.

So, upon roly days the girl sorted and rejoiced, laughing at times with catches and happy constrictions of the white throat, and praying as fervently for the welfare of those kind hearts she was leaving behind as they were praying for hers.

Thus, in dirty weather, of which she had not overmuch, but on fair days she kept the deck, as her fellow-passenger attempted to do in all weathers.

The poor lad suffered for it, bearing his sufferings with the silent pride of youth. His maritime experiences in the land-embraced sea-lochs of his native Sutherland had been poor preparation for the staggering buffets of beam-seas, and the down-plunge of the little brig into ocean valleys where her lower sails lost the wind.

In a word, young Chisholm was undergoing the humiliating experiences incidental to a first week at sea. He alone of the company of the *Mary of Yarmouth* failed at the trencher, who by nature and habit was an able trencherman. He alone had no sea-legs, whose legs had never failed him before. He could not pace the deck beside the lady without barging into her : twice he had slipped up whilst in her presence and bumped himself disgracefully ; he had fallen foul of the steersman whilst turning and had been fain to embrace the binnacle. He had emerged from the cabin on all-fours.

The lady, secure in the equilibrium acquired during her three weeks' voyage between London and the Start, tripped and sidled, pliantly giving to the plunge and recovery of the lively little craft, with a frank grace which her comrade yearned to imitate. To accompany her in her daily constitutional was at present beyond his powers, but he set himself to practise at night.

To him, patrolling the poop in persevering zig-zags, came Zabulon Sweetapple, mate, crooking an undesired arm.

" A dark ship this, Mr. Chis'sum." The man's voice sounded mournful and low.

" I had not notticed it, sir. We hang the usual lights, I suppose. And, as for illuminating this deck, the binnacle is mair than suffeecient, for it iss to avoid being seen at my exercises that I practise them at night." In speaking so stiffly he reckoned without his legs, and was fain to clutch the arm he had rejected.

The mate groaned hollowly. "' Bodily exercise profiteth little,' saith the apostle, and when I spoke of darkness I spoke in a figure. D'ye know, sir, that barring us two, and the cook—a poor creature that hardly counts—there be nought but

Quakers in our company? Quakers——” he sighed, “as calls theirselves the Lord’s people and despiseth others. Pharisees, I calls ’em.”

“A ferry goot sort of fowk, in ma humble opeenion, Mr. Mate.”

“Closed to reason, sir; wise in their own conceit. Aye, aye, a dark ship, a dark house! ‘Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see and see not: they have ears to hear and hear not: for they are a rebellious house’ (‘Zekiel, twelve, two). Now, p’raps ye’ll not believe me, sir, but ’tis gawspel fact as they Quakers reject the ordinances; no bread, no wine, and, wust of all, no ile.” Another sepulchral groan.

“Dear me, you don’t say so!” replied Chisholm in conciliatory wise, trying hard to keep down his supper. “What then are you?”

“I be one of the last o’ the Lord’s Anointers, sir,” proudly thumping a broad bosom. “Mebbe you niver heard on ’em; howsumiver, they be an ancient and honourable seck, once strong in numbers, but now dwindled to a few; a handful of corn on the top of a mountain, or rather aboard a little brig, only me and the cook (a new convert of mine, and a weakish vessel). But,” kindling, “few or many, whilst there be one, so be ’tis this one, we’ll march on to glory anointing!”

His voice rolled out in a sort of song. The great bald head of Furley appeared at the break of the poop, silently keeping an eye upon the manœuvres of his second-in-command.

“Seemingly you’ve never heerd of our dispensation. No? Tha’s curis, too. You see, we ’noints the sick. With ile, ye know.” He produced a small bottle and drew a cork: a rank, greasy odour exhaled, which began to turn the stomach of his unfortunate auditor.

“Now, if you’ll pardon my mentioning it, sir, you was mortal sick in my last watch.”

“And am like to be so again, if ye persist in sticking that stuff under ma neb!” cried the lad, his inwards heaving.

“That’s the flesh, sir; the sperrit is what we aims at. Which brings me to my pint. Jest ye let me anoint ye—a little dab——”

“Not for worlds, my goot man—*oop*!—pardon me!”

“Zabulon Sweetapple, I’ll trouble thee to put that muck o’ thine in the scuppers and tend to thy duty: she be a full point off her course.”

The master’s head disappeared again; the mate, muttering an unapostolic oath, turned from Chisholm to the steersman, whom he addressed in terms which left that dreamer’s ears tingling until the end of his trick.

Susan, too, was smilingly obdurate to his missionary zeal.

"But I am Church of England, you see, Mr. Sweetapple, baptized and confirmed; one cannot be two things at once; can one? Of course, whilst I am with these dear Quakers I do as they do: I can't help that, can I? How do you feel yourself, left alone, as you tell me?"

"Upheld, ma'am, won'erfully upheld, for the most part. Ye see, ma'am, I am a saved man, converted under good Mr. Newton—Captain John Newton, as he was then—in his Guineaman. Oh, a holy man! Sweet and precious times we've had together, him and me, with the pitch a-bubblin' betwix the deck-planks and the niggers a-hollerin' *agoa! agoa!* under hatches."

"Was he a slaver, then?" asked Sue, somewhat aghast.

"Black Ivory, ma'am, the usual thing, as foretold by Scripture, 'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be' (Genesis nine, twenty-five). Yes, upheld, as a rule. Not but what I've had my times of sperritool declension. Port, a bit, ma'am" (it was light weather and Sue was taking a lesson in steering). "The brig bein' on her best point of sailing and the wind so stiddy, ye'll need but to keep yer hands on the tiller. Not but what these here tay-kles be handy in hard weather and with a following run of sea; beautiful provisions of nature I calls 'em. Oh, I be come of godly folk, Anointers, the whole lot of us, for hunderds and hunderds of years, and with a drop of salt water in the blood as works to the top at times. Why, there's my father's uncle's head-board in Grays churchyard to show it. (They set it up as soon as his snow come back from Caraccas without him.) '*Sacred to the Memory of Tobias Sweetapple, Master Mariner of this Parish, what met his death at the Hands of a Shark.*'"

"*'Let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like his.'*"

"Yes, all gone, ma'am, the last of the true old Anointers of the Chilterns. None left but me, and these Quakers seek my life to destroy it (in a manner of speaking). Did ye ever hear how near I come to bein' a Latter Day Sacramentarian? No! Then I'll tell ye. Ah, that was an escape an' a half!"

"But why an escape? If you are the last of your people, would it not be natural to join some other body?"

"Ah, yah, ma'am, that's the wisdom o' this world. It is written, '*A seed shall serve Him*' (Psalms twenty-two, thirty). We are the Seed; that's me. But, as I was a-going to tell ye, some years back when on a job below-bridge, lighterin', I fell into such a low spot as I din't seem to mind which end came fo'most. So, bein' led away by Satan in the shape of a youngish female widder-woman (he makes up as an angel of

light at times, and comes nigh to deceive the very Elect, as she did me ; but there !) She was a L.D.S. and kep' a cook-shop at Millwall and swep' out and dusted down Zoar Chapel and found it in candles at so much a month. She come from down Ashford way, and made flead-cakes. Ah ! " (the mate sighed regretfully). " The flesh-pots o' Egypt ! " he murmured, and proceeded. " I sort of made up to her (being weak and misled), and she made out she'd have me if I was a full church member : so I made apperlication to the elders.

" They was what we call Leadin' People of the Cause ; I never see leader, and sorter kep' Zoar Chapel in their breeches pockets.

" Sez they, ' Brother Sweetapple, we be a bit s'prised at your letter. Our free seats is open to all, yes, to the weakest and humblest of God's creatures, and you have the privilege of putting something inter the plate same as we. But full membership in our little Zion us keeps for the Chosen only.' Then they sets to and tries me on a wind and runnin' free. Lastly they ups and sez they thinks mine an interesting case and was pleased to hev met me ; it'd mean total immersion ('twas Jenooary), and when I din't shy at that, they shifts and sez they thought my intellectools wasn't up to their mark, and I'd best talk it over with the Lord and—p'raps apply agin six months later.

" Bout June I writ agin, but whilst they hung in the wind, that young widder-woman ups and gives me the mitten and marries a tailor, which was a blessin' in disguise, and naterally opened my eyes to the true kericter of the L.D.S. Still, having applied, I stuck to it and kep' my app'intment—same two leadin' elders, and pretty stiff and offish I found 'em. ' Sweetapple,' they begins, no brothering me this time, ma'am, my best lighter had sunk in Limehouse Reach, and they'd heerd on't. (Stabboard, stabboard—keep her full, ma'am.) ' Sweetapple,' sez they, ' We're more s'prised than we care to say. We giv you good counsel.' ' And I took it,' sez I. ' To talk it over with the Lord,' sez they. ' An' I done it,' sez I, ' and He giv me a right clear message.' ' Ho,' sez they, very lofty like, as though a lighterman was sorter presumin', and none but owners and wharfingers should take orders from Headquarters. ' And, pray, what might He hev bid ye do ? ' sez they. ' He say,' sez I, very broken-spirited like, ' Go, thou, Zabulon Sweetapple, and make apperlication for full membership in Zoar, and I wishes ye luck. Not as I reckons you'll get in, for I bin trying to get inter that there chapel Myself this thirty year, and ain't in yet.' "

" Oh, Mr. Sweetapple, how wicked of you ! Whatever did those poor men say ? " cried Susan, shocked but amused.

“Never ye mind what they said, ma’am. Fact, I dunno as I waited long enough to catch the drift on’t, feeling a call to depart. And look ye here, ma’am. (Keep her full.) Now, see what follered ; that there female widder-woman was brought to bed with triplets first run, and druv her tailorman to drink and the Marshalsea, showing plainly that ‘ All things work together for good to them that love God ’ (Romans eight, twenty-eight). And there go three bells, and ’tis time to keep her away, so p’raps I’d best take the hellum.”

CHAPTER III

JUSTIN PROVIDES HIMSELF WITH AN ENEMY AND A FRIEND

MEANWHILE, on board H.M.S. *Paladin* the cabin passengers were shaking down into the relative positions which they were to fill during the voyage, and making initiatory movements towards mutual acquaintance in the guarded and tentative manner of the British middle class. Those who had boarded the frigate in the Thames had already come to an understanding, establishing mild attractions or repulsions as their cases might be. Major Justin, for instance, was civilly keeping himself clear of the pretty widow, a Mrs. Hollinghurst, whom we have already met casually at Blossom's Inn upon the arrival of a certain coach by which the lady had travelled from St. Albans, and other passengers from Chester.

Our Major had heard something of the lady's story : of her love-match, two years before, with old Colonel Hollinghurst of the 12th, and of her husband's death at Gibraltar, whither he had sailed with his regiment, proposing that his bride should follow him in more comfort than was possible in a crowded and ill-found transport.

It was understood that the late colonel had expressed a wish that his widow should visit his grave.

What was there in this to repel ? Nothing. Let us admit that our Major was somewhat capricious. Why is one drawn to this human creature and repelled by that other ? Justin could have given no particular reason for his attitude ; for his want of complete sympathy with a really charming person ; nor did he feel called upon to do so, even to himself. He did not especially care for her society, and that was enough for him. It certainly was not that he preferred another (there were two other ladies on board) ; there was no woman in the case, nor room for any in his heart, as he believed.

Nor could his want of attention be considered uncivil or pointed. Mrs. Hollinghurst asked nothing at his hands ; the youngest and handsomest of the three ladies who had shipped from Gravesend bore the Major no grudge for his abstraction ; if he cared not for her conversation there were others who did.

At Falmouth the frigate filled ; reliefs and the officers in charge of them, and more ladies came on board, and the business of self-introduction would be recommenced as soon as the late arrivals should have regained their appetites and their complexions.

There was one who had lost neither. Whilst the gentlemen from Pendennis lined the quarter-deck bulwarks in attitudes of passive endurance, and their womenfolk kept their cabins, one lady paced the white planking with firmly set and practised feet. In person tall, massive, and middle-aged, Roman-nosed and double-chinned with the eye and port of a general, she surveyed her new command with a smile that was at once tolerant and stern. An experienced traveller this ; it was the era of the hoop, but, with foreknowledge of the exiguities of her kingdom, the lady-paramount had come to it dressed less in accordance with the mode than with the requirements of narrow passages and a tiny bunk. The effect might be a trifle ludicrous, but was characteristic ; this embodiment of health, experience, sanity, and sense was a British matron.

"I swear that's 'Trigge of the Twelfth,' " whispered an officer from behind his hand. "Who ? Ah, ye'll know before we have been a week at sea ! I knew her by sight at Colchester, years since ; her husband led a wing, but she commanded the regiment ; it was wonderful. I heard she was at Gib, and didn't expect her on board. Is there anybody here she knows, I wonder ? Hullo, she's boarding Justin !"

The fellow-travellers had already passed one another thrice without recognition, a failure for which the lady's dress, the man's peaked and lapped travelling-cap, and the nationality of both must be responsible. At the fourth meeting the lady accosted him :

"Colonel Justin has evidently forgotten Mrs. Trigge." Her curtsey was a failure, spoilt by the roll of the frigate : she laughed apologetically, and the gentleman, uncovering and starting slightly, laughed too, puckering the corners of his eyes in a swift spasm of recollection.

"Madam !—your servant !—and your pardon. Forgotten ye ? Indeed no !" (Confound it, what is the woman's name ?) "But when we met—where was it ? Lady Anlaby's rout, for one place (I have it !)—you were—we were both of us differently dressed. But, what brings ye here, my dear madam ? No ill news from Colonel Trigge, I trust ? Thank God for that. Ye were but just landed from Gibraltar when we last met, as I think."

"With my daughters ; yes, I see ye recall me, Colonel. Yes, their father foresaw troubled times for the garrison and

sent us all home, but I'm not the woman to leave my husband to stand a siege without a wife to take care of him." The speaker did not look that sort of woman at all. "So I've shipped for the Rock again, against orders." She laughed cheerily as one who knows that her disobedience will be condoned, as well it might be, for during her six months' furlough had she not besieged poor Mr. Secretary Jenkinson upon her colonel's behalf? Had she not set every wheel turning and pulled every wire by which promotion might be accelerated? Oh, a terrible intriguer, flagrant, unabashed, and unsnubbable is your British matron when upon the warpath, for the husband or son of her heart.

"But yourself, Colonel," she ran on; "what do ye here? You, who were but just back from the Indies, and in the Company's service, too, where ye had done such wonders, and were quite the lion of Town, Colonel."

"Madam, ye are too kind; I am merely major!" interposed Justin, smiling.

"Major? No, no; that will hardly pass, will it? I had it from *you know who*—well, Mr. Jenkinson himself, that he had offered ye the colonelcy of a regiment."

"He was kind enough to do something of the sort——"

"And ye were polite enough to decline it? Never tell me!"

"Madam"—the two were pacing side by side now—"the colonelcy would have taken me to New York, and I most particularly wanted to go to Gibraltar."

"Ye did?—ye good, whimsical man! Then some other gentleman will be thanking ye for the billet ye were foolish enough to refuse. But I beg your pardon, for indeed 'tis no business of mine, as no doubt ye are thinking."

"My dear madam, I am thinking nothing so rude. I am going to the Rock as a major in the 12th—your husband's regiment"—the lady bowed and smiled her pleasure at the information—"because on no other terms could I get there to do what I have to do. And, now, if I trouble ye, Madam, with my private concerns, it is just because the more widely my need is known the more chances I have of finding what I am seeking. You must know that before leaving Madras I accepted the wardship of two young people here at home—orphans. One I have found, and, by God's blessing, have settled in life. He is Ensign Travis, now serving at Gibraltar in your husband's regiment. His sister I am still seeking. I have followed her, Oh, many a mile"—he laughed wearily—"last it was from London to Chester, and from Chester back to Town; I have heard of her here, there, and everywhere. She is supposed to have contracted an unfortunate marriage.

Her husband is said to have sailed for Gibraltar last January. I am in hopes of finding her with him upon my arrival."

"And ye refused your regiment upon such an account as this?"

"No help for it, ma'am; 'twas my bare duty."

"Then all I'll say is that I wish from my heart there were more like ye in the service. It shall be my pleasure to make your ensign's acquaintance upon our rejoining. I cannot recall the name: there was no Travis in the mess when I sailed. And the lady, the young lady. By what name shall I——?"

"Ah, 'tis there ye pose me, madam. Her husband's name seems to be either Tighe, or Bowles, I cannot determine which. My lawyers had news of him from a hackney coachman, and I, from another source, and under another name, heard of him from Lord Duddingstone. He is not gazetted as serving in any regiment of the line that is quartered at the Rock."

"But there are auxiliaries, as ye know, Major," remarked the lady—"Corsicans and Hanoverians. Have ye inquired?"

"I have, but so far ineffectually; the states are loosely kept. There was much confusion and overlapping at the War Office under the late Secretary. But I have my hopes."

The two passed on still in conference. A very big, red-headed officer, seated beneath the weather bulwark in the discomfort of incipient nausea, had overheard fragments of their conversation as they passed and repassed. At first he had paid no attention to matters which, as he conceived, touched him in nowise, but at their last passing he had caught his own name, slighted altered, indeed, but recognisable, and coupled with it the name of his adoption, now dropped. He pricked his ears and listened with intentness, "Begad, an' I'm in luck again," muttered Boyle, "for if 'tis at Gibraltar ye' are looking for the gur'rl, ye will be looking a long while. And, who the jeuce is this little cock-sparrow who has been doggin' the footsteps of me father's son this six months? Faith, an' he'd betther be walkin' wide of me for his hilt's sake!"

CHAPTER IV

A QUAKERS' MEETING INTERRUPTED

WE all of us know, or think that we know, what a Quakers' Meeting is like, but to most of us the knowledge is traditional, an effect of second-hand impressions, the residuum of common report, and in need of bringing up to date. Elia's essay is a classic, and final with regard to the practice of a century ago, but the "Goodly Sect," as he named it, has altered in externals since Lamb shared its gentle spiritual exercises. The old inwardness remains, although garb and speech have changed. New occasions have bred new issues, and the descendants of Fox and Penn, those truly heroic innovators, have arisen from the meditative silence of a century and are strenuously, if quietly, at work again.

Nowhere to-day shall you see four blank, colour-washed walls, enclose such a company as Mr. Walter West has drawn in his fine water-colour, the *Silent Meeting*—rank behind rank of placid faces, differing in age and circumstance, but alike in expression, the lines of fleshly desire and worldly care subdued and smoothed out of countenances sobered and quieted by ninety minutes of communion with the Highest in a primal silence.

Such faces are hardly possible to-day, nor are such garments worn. I close my eyes and hear the still rustle of poplin, the soft creep of silks, the infinitely faint rising and lapsing of cap-strings lying upon the bosoms of gentle women. Ah, and the colours that rush upon the inward eye that is the bliss of solitude, the symphonies of dove-hues and drabs, pale lavenders and tender lilacs, unobtrusive half-tints, and lost shades of bygone materials. The mittens, too, and the creamy effects and delicate textures of those ineffable little shawls which my great-aunts wore over their dear shoulders, with ends, not hanging loosely in worldly sort, but crossed and secured with tiny golden pins. And the dear, queer, old

coal-scuttle bonnets of cardboard, covered with slate-coloured satin, and lined with white sarsenet, which were worn over caps enclosing plaits of well-ruled hair. (My friend, Mr. West, has drawn them all ; there is no one else who can. I say it, who know.)

Such were the women whom Lamb likened to "troops of the shining Ones," and as such do I recall them.

Their men were almost equally wonderful. Who nowadays wears the frock-coat of mouse-brown, faced West of England broadcloth, a garment with skirts so ample as to need lifting at a muddy crossing ? What living tailor could be trusted to reproduce the chaste curves of those upright collars—(if rolled, or snipped, they were held to lack "simplicity")—and those immaculate and delightfully wrinkly drab 'smalls,' and pearl-buttoned gaiters cut full to cover the instep and strapped down ? The memorable broad-brimmed hats, the thread gloves and all ! They are gone with the separated lives, quaint speech, and curbed expression of the Middle Age of Quakerism, itself transitional but extraordinarily picturesque. Yes, they are lost to us : there is no one left who knows how to dress in the simple, grand manner of the saints. Our bishops ? Ah, my dear madam, a bishop nowadays is an underpaid, overdriven person, breaking into his capital year by year, living beyond his means, like the rest (has he not published his accounts ?), killing himself in a breathless scramble to overtake arrears ; licensing, ordaining, confirming, inhibiting, voting, scheming, protesting against time, a pathetic personality, a martyr if you will, and a martyr of your making, yes, *yours*, who demand all this of him, and pay him an inadequate three or four thousand a year. (Do you in your hearts believe that an apostle would have taken the job on for the money ?) Nay, I beseech ye, bishop me no bishops ; excellent fellows they are, but you must not claim for them that they know how to carry their finery. It came to them too late in life ; they are almost as ill at ease in their millinery as an esquire bedell at a Cambridge degree-giving. No, a modern bishop lives too hard for his clothes to preserve the bandbox sheen and the marjoram scent ; they betray rough usage. None will deny that some feeling is occasionally shown at Church Conferences, and a prelate who had ridden the whirlwind and controlled the storm of internecine polemics may be expected to display the results in the sit of his apron and the slackened rigging of his hat.

But to my Quakers. They too have descended into the arena, gaining much but losing, alas ! the aroma and distinction which I remember, I who have seen it die away and fade into the light of common day.

The super-oriental deliberation is gone too.

Only in some tiny country meeting-house, deep amid copses and corn, if there, shall you find your ideal. The nipping silence of self-examination, the breathless minute preceding the deliverance of his message by some Ministering Friend, the broken outpouring of unpremeditated prayer. Such a scene will remain in the memory of the participant: the black oaken beams overhead, the hard uncushioned benches polished by two centuries of use, the small-paned windows darkened by the flat green palms of encroaching ivy which has o'er-flourished rooftree and chimney-stack, and awaits leave to take fuller possession, the sunshine through the open door and the obstreperous calling of the cuckoo in the graveyard tree intensifying the depth of the silence maintained by perhaps a score of deeply meditating humans, elderly, childless, dwindling. Have patience, ivy, thy time will come! Not here in this shoaling backwater, but afar, in populous centres, in Garden Cities, Settlements, and Adult Schools, is the life of Quakerism pulsing strongly, modernising, adapting, and growing; a force to be reckoned with.

If now I should introduce you to a Quakers' Meeting aboardship a hundred and thirty years ago, I will beg you to clear your minds of the unessential.

It was First Day (Sunday) morning at sea. The Straits convoy, heart-stirring sight, was running due south before a gentle, crisp, nor'westerly wind, with the loom of the high Portuguese land on the port quarter. Every bluff-bowed, square-rigged craft of them all dressed for Sunday and flying her red ensign at the peak, and whatever else of split pennant and house-flag she could show, trudged across the polished, whale-backed seas, nodding to herself and mumbling the white bicker beneath her dolphin-striker, like a dog that carries a bone in his mouth.

His Majesty's ship *Paladin*, forty guns, ranging among her charge, as a colley ranges his flock, had overlooked a score or so of low-riding, sail-shaded decks. The day being fair, her quarter rail was topped by the caps and bonnets of her passengers, amusing themselves in superior fashion by quizzing the doings of their social inferiors.

Here, on the snow, lumbering alongside, was a watch in disgrace—putting in a Sabbath morning at the holy-stone. On the brig ahead 'twas washing-day. Cards and sleep engrossed the energies of a third, whilst in the waist of a fourth craft two apprentices were deciding the merits of some question with the fist, watched by their elders. The gentlemen upon the frigate's quarter-deck admired the young rascals' pluck, the ladies cried fie and refused to look, but

looked nevertheless. "Oh, the naughty boys! Captain, can nothing be done to stop them?" Captain Wynyard thus appealed to opined that to fight was a trick of youth, and that a little blood-letting would make of them the better friends. The elder ladies sniffed, the young widow shook her parasol at the commander, "Captain, I fear ye have a hard heart!"

"On the contrary, ma'am, 'tis tender as your own, but what would ye have me do? put my frigate about to let ye scold a couple of naughty youngsters? But unless there's something amiss with my glass, there's nothing aboard this brig we are overhauling to offend the finest of female sensibilities. Look ye there, ma'am! 'cod, 'tis a show of wax figures. We'll see more of this. Port your helm half a point, Mr. Pratt; lay her alongside as near as may be without carrying anything away aloft, or knocking the tar off her sheer-strakes."

The noble frigate, a wall of painted broadside culminating in a pyramid of canvas, accurately cut, accurately set, and every cloth of it drawing, came up upon the brig's starboard quarter, the green seas dividing into white fleeces beneath her forefoot and hissing along her side, blanketing the smaller craft as she took the wind out of her sails. So well was she conned and steered that there was not a lady upon her quarter-deck but thought she could have tossed her glove aboard the narrow poop below.

"But what are the creatures doing?" asked Mrs. Hollinghurst of the tall, ruddy-haired Irish major upon her left hand.

"I've not the faintest idea, me dear leedy. I'd say they were sitting for their portruts, if such a thing were possible. Did j'ever witness such a scene before upon the high seas, Captain? What explanation d'ye offer?"

"They remind me of the stone Buddhas one sees in the East; eighteen of them, and each as still as a graven image," remarked a small, nattily dressed man upon the widow's right (our friend Major Justin, none other). "The same fixity, the same abstraction. Will not one of them raise an eyelid? Ah, there's a woman among them; surely such an apparition as a King's frigate within reach of her hand will distract her attention! Ah! what——"

The ships were now at their nearest, a proximity only possible to the daring and consummate seamanship of the past. The frigate's approach had becalmed the smaller craft, which rode with hanging sails upon an even keel beneath the lee of the taller ship, every nook and corner of her decks open to inspection. Her steersman alone was standing,

the rest of her company lined the poop bulwarks facing inward, seated upon water-casks, beef-tubs, the flemished coils of the main-halliard falls, or the deck-planking itself.

The spectators hung as far over the hammock-nettings as their respective heights permitted, the better to overlook the singular scene below.

"Mummies returning to Egypt by sea, ma'am," replied the First Luff to Mrs. Trigge's question.

"I suggest the Seven Sleepers broken adrift," observed the officer of the watch.

"Or a petrification of Noah's Ark," hazarded the Irish major.

"Or the Wise Men of Gotham at sea in a bowl," put in a midshipman in an undertone.

"Oh, do help me up a little, I can't see a bit!" cried Mrs. Hollinghurst petulantly. Both Justin and Boyle assisted her and were rewarded with impartial smiles. "Oh, thanks, both of you—most kind! This is better, how singular! But what is he going to do? What is he doing?"

"Praying, ma'am," replied the captain, and men stopped speaking.

One of the bent, engrossed figures had removed his cap, had laid it upon the deck and set his knee upon it. The rest arose to their feet, uncovering. It was in the act of rising that Susan, the one woman in that silent company, raised her face and found herself looking into the very eyes of the Irish major, not fifty feet away. Her scream, a scream of ecstasy, shook the very hearts of all that heard it. There, so close to her arms, just across that narrow lane of water, was her husband! She sprang across the brig's deck, leapt upon a water-cask, and had a foot upon the very rail itself before Furley and young Chisholm could catch her by the skirts. "Con! oh, Con, dear! Let me go! It is my husband; yes, Major Tighe—my husband, I say!"

Piteous was her outcry, and in vain. As she wailed her appeal to it the crimson face peering down upon her purpled with passion, the lips blurted a curse and were gone. Major Tighe, or Boyle, had slipped to the deck behind him, and simultaneously the brig's sails caught the wind again, filled with a joyful clap and the little craft heeled. The frigate, by far the faster vessel, was passing, had passed, the water-lane widened apace, the show was over.

The quarter-deck of the *Paladin* buzzed, the gentlemen assisted the ladies to descend, the party broke up into groups, all speaking at once, all questioning, "Who was she?" "What did she mean?" "Whom was she addressing?"

"What brig was that?" asked the Captain of the officer of the watch, and learned that she was the *Mary of Yarmouth*.

"One of the Hippisley fleet, sir," added the Third Luff, "with a cargo of beer from Thrale's for the garrison.

"And that's Old Tom Furley, her master, the one in the wig who caught the lady's petticoat. I know him." He sketched the ex-gunner's story in a few bold strokes.

"Then it seems we have broken up a Meeting," smiled the Captain. "Let us hope that His Gracious Majesty won't hear of our misdeeds and take 'em amiss: he is supposed to cherish a weakness for the Quakers, God bless him!"

"Or the Quakeresses, God bless *them*!" muttered First Luff, and every one smiled, remembering that twenty-year-old story of Hannah Lightfoot and the susceptible youth of George.

"And whom was the creature addressing, Major Justin?" asked the pretty widow. "'Tis plain that she knows one of us; not yourself? Is it possible?"

"I should have said that she was looking more to your left, madam," replied Justin, innocently enough, without thought of consequences.

"To Major Boyle? La! How jealous you men are of one another! Let us tax him with it—ask him for an explanation." The lady was mischievously bent at the moment, but meant no harm. "Major! Where is Major Boyle?"

There were others who were asking the same question. By a process of elimination, the Irishman remained the most probable object of the fair stranger's hail. But the Major was not to be seen, he had left the deck; nor, when he remounted the companion, a few minutes later, was he in the humour to submit to cross-examination, or to accept the pleasantries of the men in good part. Within the minute he had singled out the first lieutenant, drawn him aside, and given him to understand that he had said too much. There were curling lips, for the senior service will have its joke, and whilst hating quarrels, is not to be bluffed. No man, whatever his record as a duellist, can stare down the whole ward-room of a crack frigate, and Boyle presently discovered that he had his hand in a wasp's nest, and was like to be the helpless victim of practical jokes for the rest of the voyage, just the traditional maritime ingenuities of men who had been midshipmen themselves yesterday, persons with nothing in this world to lose but their lives and their high spirits, possessions of which it was for the moment impossible to deprive them.

Scenes followed. Captain Wynyard, already apprised and watchful, intervened.

"I regret, Major, that it has come to this. No, don't interrupt me, if ye please, I am not going to explain, and, keep your seat, sir: I command here. As I was about to say, 'tis a rule of my service that where there can be no fighting there shall be no quarrelling. I need hardly say that there can be no fighting aboard my ship. . . . Oho! 'Near the end of an uncomfortable voyage,' are we? So I may take it ye propose prosecuting your quarrel at the Rock? . . . Let me tell ye at once, sir, that cannot be. If needful, I should feel justified in refusing shore-leave to my officers. 'That would not afflict ye?' No, but it would not be for more than a day, sir; for one word from me to His Excellency would prevent your landing at all. I have the honour of the Governor's good acquaintance, and happen to know the light in which he regards affairs of honour. Unless I am mistaken, ye are replacing a gentleman whom he broke for fighting, or who was killed in a duel, I forget which, but the story is well known; and I give ye my word that if Sir George got wind that ye had a matter of this complexion upon your hands he would not permit ye to join. 'Twill be close arrest for you, sir, and a passage Home aboard the first transport that sails. (Ye shall not ship with me.)

"Ye may spare your sour looks, sir; they will not deter me from my duty. Nor can ye quarrel with me, if ye would; but I think better of your judgement. Here is my hand; take it or leave it. If ye take it, I shall understand that ye have laid aside all disputes with my ward-room, and shall reintroduce ye to it upon that footing, and I'll answer for it that my officers will let bygones be bygones."

Boyle stared, bridling in silence and felt the blood pumping hard to his head, but was not sufficiently beside himself to make an enemy of the one man on board who wished him well.

Moreover, there is no arguing with a commander across his own cabin table; so the Irishman forced a smile, extended his hand, and the matter was at an end so far as the lieutenant was concerned.

But there were tongues on board the *Paladin* which her captain could not curb. The elder ladies laid heads together and proposed to probe the scandal upon public grounds. Major Boyle's attentions to Mrs. Hollinghurst were marked; they were obvious; he should be asked to clear himself before things went farther. He was loath, he was adroit, but was cornered at last, and by the redoubtable Mrs. Trigge.

"I give ye my wor'd, madam——"

"Yes, no doubt, sir; but we all heard ye addressed as *Major*——"

"I am not the only major on board, Madam."

"——and by the diminutive of your Christian name, sir."

"I did not hear it, madam."

"The rest of us did, sir; and, what is more, heard the young person call you her *husband*. Now, what may we understand by that?"

"That your hearing is defectuv, madam. To the best of me belief the young woman was addressing yersilf, and her wor'd was *grandmother*."

"I thank you, sir; but if 'twas *I* who was addressed, why should *you* hide yourself behind the bulwarks and leave the deck?"

"Madam, I am no carput-knight, but a souldier who has made several campeens, and has near a dozen wounds in him. I do not make a song about thim, but a person of your eege and experience should know that such little mementoes have a knack—in a wor'd, madam, me knee gave way at the moment, that's all."

"Sir, I commiserate ye"—curtseying; "but when a gentleman's knee gives way does he usually cry '*D—n the wench*'?"

Need one say that the ladies were dissatisfied with the Major's explanation? Mrs. Lieutenant-Colonel Trigge, as representing and embodying public opinion, declined to recognise his existence during the remainder of the voyage, and allowed it to be known that on reaching the Rock she would feel it her duty to institute inquiries. In the meantime Mrs. Hollinghurst, who had not personally caught the words "*husband*" and "*Con*," and who thought the behaviour of the elder women inquisitorial and wanting in charity, was sensible that she was in the company and under the eye of the leaders of the Garrison society, whom it behoved her to conciliate, and grew absent, *distracte*, and circumspectly distant when next addressed by the offender; and—for she was of a sociable nature—increasingly affable to Justin.

Had the ladies known, there was unimpeachable evidence under their hands for all that they suspected. A cowed, ill-fed private of foot in the frigate's waist had witnessed the scene and recognised the girl, and knew well the meaning of her appeal, and to whom it had been addressed. This man, who had enlisted under the name of Wallet, had learned his goose-step at Hounslow, and had been shipped with other details at Sheerness. He was, as his comrades knew, a person of education, letter-writer in ordinary to his company, but of

the lowest spirits, and always thrown into a pallid sweat by the rare appearances in the waist of Major Boyle, whose eye he seemed totally incapable of meeting. The Major, by some chance, had not hitherto recognised him. As affairs stood 'twas to be hoped that no recognition would take place during the voyage. The man was not in Boyle's regiment, and would slip from under his hand upon reaching the Rock, but whilst he was upon shipboard was in the power of one who had few scruples.

Sue, meanwhile, hanging over the brig's gunwale with yearning, outstretched hands and passionately imploring eyes, beheld the frigate's quarter slide past, port after port, just beyond that narrow strip of sea-water which severed her from her husband.

Until that moment she had resolutely put from her the thought of deliberate abandonment; despite her aunt's sneers, the idea of betrayal had not effected a lodgment in her mind. She was a lawful wife temporarily parted from her husband by some inexplicable accident, and the sudden exigencies of his service. This recognition was the first staggering blow to her confidence. The man whom she had supposed to be in Gibraltar had plainly spent these past months in England, and near to her, so near at Falmouth, at least, that their ships had lain weather-bound in the same harbour. That Mr. Tighe had intentionally avoided her she could not think, her presence aboard the *Mary of Yarmouth* being known to few, but that he had sought her seemed more than dubious; that hot, angry face, startled and repellant, peering down upon her from over the *Paladin's* hammock-nettings, had spoken to her with awakening plainness.

Meanwhile the blue lane widened, the seas crisped and broke between the vessels, the frigate, a tower of white sunlit canvas, swept ahead and lessened. Sue, weeping bitterly, hurried below.

Meeting "broke up": the jacks went forward: Furley and Chisholm remained.

The men looked one upon another. Among the row of be-capped and be-bonneted heads topping the hammocks, Furley had recognised the bridegroom of that improvised marriage. That the man had deliberately deserted his wife of malice prepense he never had doubted. That he should be sailing in the same convoy showed the finger of Providence. But the matter was one which concerned the lady, and, less directly, himself as her guardian (under God)—an affair in which this young Scots officer had had no claim to intermeddle. The skipper spat overside to relieve a deep disgust, shut his mouth like a sea-chest, and said nothing.

But the other had seen what he had seen, and must naturally be conceded some liberty of comment.

"Eh, an' what'll we mek o' that, Maister Furley? 'Twass the big, reid Major sure enough; but what hass the man to do with our Mistress Tighe—or she with Major Boyle?"

"Boyle, d'ye call him, sir?"

"Assuredly, Boyle, the new major of the Hardenbergs sailing in the *Paladin* with reliefs for the garrison. Oh, I ken the shentleman weel; for why, I haf messed with him at Pendennis, and dined at the same table at private houses in Falmouth. Ou, and sin him here and there aboot the toun a score of times. Ken him? Ou, ay!"

"Boyle, d'ye call him?" pursued the master. "Are we talkin' o' the same man? Would he be summut of a woundy, gret, red-faced up-standin' Irishman?"

"The fery same, ye hae him till a hair; it is Boyle tae the vara life; but by what name did he pass wi' ye, sir?"

Furley's mind moved slowly, but with the sure-footedness of a blue-water seaman. The Major's action and Mrs. Tighe's behaviour had aroused in young Chisholm a legitimate curiosity; unseasonable reticence upon his own part would root in this youth's mind the seeds of injurious suspicion. Besides, Chisholm and himself seemed holding the opposite ends of the same clue. He would speak out.

"He called himself Tighe on the night when he married the young 'ooman," said he: "I was called in to give her away. A fullish business, yew'll be sayin', but she were an orphan; her folkses all dead; she lorst in Lunnon; throwed away, in a manner o' speakin'. He orfered marriage; there were a parson handy (mighty handy). I had my doubts, but there! It seemed better nor nawthing. I've got the lines upon me, so far as that goes.

"But the feller giv her the slip in Lunnon—cut cable and runned. We heered he were for the Rock garrison (I see the paint on his sea-chest). I couldn't do nawthing for the poor lamb at the time meself, being out of a berth, but Providence remembered the gal. I got my first ship, this here, a thing as I never dreamed on, and found her charter was for the Rock with beer (there's Providence again for ye!), so, naturally, I gives the young 'ooman a passage out, for she be mortal set on the man; and who be I to come atween 'em?"

"He will repudiate the whole thing, sure as deith. Did ye nottis the face of him?"

"And I thinks so tew, atween yew an' me; but he've got to repewdiate her and me and the paper, I tell ye. Oh, a dam clever feller, I 'lows; but yew'll see as Providence'll be one tew many for him yet, bor!" In the warmth of feeling at

the moment, the strong expression passed unnoticed, and a curl of the wig was saved.

"Humph," mused the Scot. "I wuss ye weel, and the ledly; but in my opeenion the man is no' worth the chasing. The lass—the ledly, I would say—is a warl too fine for him. Cot tam him!—and pless her!—Amen!"

CHAPTER V

HOSTES GENTIUM

EVENING and an Atlantic fog lay upon the Straits. The convoy, after standing out to sea for some hours, had taken advantage of a change of wind to run in for Tarifa Point. Had it slipped past its ambuscaders? If so, it might hope, if the wind held, to reach the shelter of Gibraltar that night. The wind did not hold; a clammy south-wester brought them in from outside and died away in the Strait, leaving them blind in the heart of the fog-bank which had travelled with them. Unlit, apprehensive, the multitudinous craft drifted with bated breaths, fearful of every sound.

Hark! a faint shock shook the curtains of fog. Sue started.

"Sunset gun on the Rock," said Furley.

"So near as that? Then we are Home!"

"Pray God ye be, my dear; but we've this here night to wear through yet. Was ever such a v'yage? My 'departure' was Green Bank Steps, and the day afore we sailed at that! For though we lay a'most alongside St. Mawes fort and could hear the sentry blow his nose, the fog was that thick I never see the last of the place, nor got cross-bearings o' St. Anthony's nor the Manacles, neyther. . . Serry de Sintry * hull-down wuz my first land-fall, and here I be again within hearin' o' Europa Point gun but nawthin' wisible. 'Tis like playing o' blind-man's-buff in a barn with gals, with Moors for mawthers! Well, well! 'tis a muddle with no sin in it, like a good few o' Providence's doin's. Pass the word for the hands to come aft, Sweetapple, and, if ye please, we'll have no loud talk aboard ontill we be out o' this." He perused the sea-smother overside until the shuffling of feet at the break of the poop told him that his audience was assembled, then, having cleared his throat, he leant over the rail addressing his ship's company in simple conversational terms.

* *Sierra di Cintra*, the jagged peaks above Lisbon.

"Friends, lookye here ; some on ye don't know, but some on ye does, as how this here's the reskiest bit o' sea this v'yage.

"'Tis this way. Here lies we a-drifting, and, onless I be out o' my reckoning, the indraught'll take us pretty close inshore to the southward before this night's out. Which means we may be boarded by Moors any minute."

This dispiriting news was imparted in a husky, unemotional monotone, and was received by the Quaker crew in silence.

The Anointer mate bestowed his quid in a check-pouch well outside his starboard lower grinding-teeth before liberating his mind.

"I s'pose, Mr. Furley, what you be a-drivin' at is as how we'd best fall to prayers, for there ain't to be no fightin'?"

"Thee has about hit it, Sweetapple. Thee knows thy agreement wi' me whenas thee signed on."

"That's all very well, and I daresay as I truly meant it, but the flesh is weak at times, Mr. Furley ; and all I arsts is, Is you and they"—pointing to the hands—"be I, be the young orficer gen'leman, be the young female, to lay down our throats to the knife o' the fust dirty blackamoor as climbs over that there gunwale? Not likely! Them handspikes lies too handy. Oh, and I've sin ye use your fistes something pretty in old days, Mr. Furley, and may again."

Furley's great tanned mask of a face was awork in the dusk, and seemed to the watching Sue to be aglow with some inner source of illumination.

"Zabulon Sweetapple! Zabulon Sweetapple! Get thee behind me! for thou savourest not of the things of God. In fac' what thee've just bin and uttered come d—d nigh to incitements to mutiny; yes, thou swab!" He paused, recollecting himself, and deliberately took the last of the dilapidated wig from his head, walked to the side, dropped it overboard, and returned to his post with bitten lip. But the fire still burned within him; more was coming.

"Them's our pren-ci-pyles, the pren-ci-pyles o' the S'siety o' Friends, and I mean 'em to perwail aboard this here brig. I'll have peace aboard her. . . *peace*, says I, with a *p*, and a *e*, and a *e*, and a *s*. Yes, if so be I has to fight the lot on ye for it, single-handed. Nor I don't mean that ezackly, neyther." He paused. "I can't take an oath, as thee knows, bein' forbid, but *thee* can and thinks it no sin, friend Sweetapple, so I'll just trouble thee to give me thy very best davy on the gawspels for to lift no blanked finger if Providence permits as we be boarded."

"Me to swear not to 'fend myself? I'll see ye jiggered fust!" growled the other. "Now, don't ye go for to lay a finger on me, or——" The mate's voice was growing shrill,

he backed hastily for "no-man's-land" abaft the knight-heads, as the skipper swung his great frame lightly down from the poop to the main-deck and lurched towards him with swift strides.

Susan's eyes rounded. Chisholm looked grave. The Quaker hands stood stock still, each with his eyes to his front, as their captain bore down upon his mate in order of battle. None spoke, none interfered.

'Tis dangerous when lesser natures come
Betwixt the pass, and fell incensèd points
Of mighty opposites.

"Don't hit me, Furley; remember yer perfession!" cried Sweetapple, who had doubled back aft as the skipper went forward, and now preferred his appeal from behind the long-boat upon the main-hatch.

"Hit thee?" growled the other with restrained contempt, as he strode past the mutineer without a side glance, and reaching the rack where the handspikes were secured, hove them overside two at a time.

"There," said he, as the last splashed alongside. "The Lord'll send us new toothpicks in His good time. And, harkye, my hearties, and Oh," he groaned, "I dew sim to wish as how Providence had been and sent a proper servant o' His—One of Us (and for ch'ice an Acknowledged Minister), for to give His message and put the thing ship-shape, Bristol fashion. Howsomever, here goes! A-hem! 'tis this way. I've bin and had an ex-pairience. . . 'Twas like this; there stood by me last night, about seven bells, the angel of the Lord, Whose I am and Whom I serve, and He says, says He, 'Thomas Furley, there'll be a mossel o' resk along o' these here Moors, but,' says He, 'stick to thy testimony and Matthew five; no vi'lence, mind! And behold I give thee thy ship's company, all them as sail with thee, every man jack on'm, man and 'ooman, craft and all, with her tackle, apparel, provisions, and furniture.' Think o' that! Wherefore, my hearties, be of good cheer, for I believe God, and there shall not fall an hair from the head of any one of ye."

The big man delivered his message with pauses and hesitations, and some hemming, under the stress of so powerful an emotion that the sweat gathered upon his brows and his hands twitched as they hung loose beside him. By the time he had ended he shook from head to foot as one palsied.

A murmur of assent, with here and there a low Amen, arose from the hands as they turned and went wooden-facedly forward as though such a performance was all in their day's work.

Chisholm turned to Sue. "Mrs. Tighe, this beats me. What'll ye be making o't yersel'?"

"Mr. Chisholm, I am for Mr. Furley, and so must you be. Think, we are an unarmed company, and if anything should happen—" she quivered—"the courage of one man, or of two, could do nothing but bring trouble upon the rest, and injury upon yourself, or—worse," she added with restrained feeling. He heard her teeth chatter in the growing dusk, but could no longer see her face.

This woman was getting very dear to him. He had put the thought from him, fought it down, at first from prudential reasons; his position in his service did not warrant his marrying, his private means were exiguous; such a union, if it were permissible in law, would be ruinous to both. That such a marriage as Furley had witnessed would hold good in Scotland the young man believed, but its validity in England he more than doubted. Tighe's, or Boyle's, public repudiation of his wife during the voyage gave the lad food for reflection. Obviously the man had married the girl clandestinely, and under an assumed name; the officiating priest might have been in orders, more probably was a layman masquerading in gown and bands. That she had loved her deceiver once he must assume; her journey in pursuit of him, her agitation at seeing him again, all attested as much; but the lad fancied that her love had suffered such a wound as it would hardly recover. Neglect, ill-usage, faithlessness, brutality even, some women's hearts can endure, if the embers of affection are kept alive by occasional repentance; but who can forgive a public repudiation? That the action, or inaction, of Tighe, or Boyle, amounted to this was evident. A word from him to the captain of the *Paladin* would have reunited them. He had held his peace. Day after day since that distressing recognition, Susan had watched the topsails of her husband's ship; surely he would relent, would come for her—or to her. He had still shunned her; she felt herself abandoned indeed, deserted in very truth, and her love lay a-dying.

Chisholm, with the keen vision of a lover, saw all this—saw too that, torn as it was by her wrongs, there was as yet no room for himself in this woman's heart; sore and strained and bruised it was, but still faintly beating time to the music it had learnt from its unworthy lord. Her plastic imagination had been deeply impressed. The first love of a girl is a tremendous passion. Woe to her who trusts unwisely, and deeper woe to him who proves himself unworthy of the trust; surely it were better for him that a great millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.

For the present, and for long to come, poor Sue's standards of manhood were fixed by memories of her splendid, truculent, ruffian husband. His voice rung in her ear in dreams, his step, his hand, his manner, the height and weight and virile presence of him still held her; no other man appealed to her as yet as a possible substitute or successor. The very idea would have aroused all her noblest instincts in opposition.

Chisholm, an inexperienced lad in matters of the heart, shy and diffident where Boyle would have been prompt and secure of his position, divined so much and bided his time. What he could do was done: unobtrusive hourly offerings of such assistance as a man may tender to the woman who is his fellow-prisoner upon shipboard. He had already learnt to watch for her occasions, and knew, having grown unselfishly wise in love's lore, how to efface himself, and when to concede to her inward trouble the solitude it craved. His reticence won him as much as his speech. From these abstentions, after a long day of rolling calm, on which the poor girl's misery had grown and grown, until only an hour's weeping in the cabin could render her life endurable to her for another night—after such a spell of silence and aloofness the young people would seek one another's society with fresh zest. The calm had broken, and last night's tears dried, the sun of a southern morning would be warm upon the deck-planks; the ship, under reefed topsails beating through blue water that broke inboard at whiles, and a company of clamorous gulls would be wheeling and crying about her. Then 'twas sweet to be alive after all, and good, as Sue found, to have a strong and attentive cavalier to arrange her seat and wraps for her on so lively a craft.

Were those days over for ever? Was all to end here? Chisholm realised the precariousness of the ship's position and the possibilities of the night. A shift of wind, the holding of this calm, the indraught, the lifting of this fog-curtain, a dozen mischances against which seamanship was powerless, might place this whole ship's company, and himself, and—worst of all, this lady, in the slave-pen. He might see within the week his fellow-travellers manacled, handled, appraised by dirty Moors, bid for and sold apart; this might be his own fate. But what of Mistress Tighe's? Oh, Lord! Lord! He cried dumbly for help to the Unseen, and went apart from the lady to grind his teeth in helpless perplexity, knowing full well that she had spoken but the bare truth, and that, come what may, there must be no fighting.

Darkness fell swiftly upon the fog-bound fleet. Upon the *Mary of Yarmouth* all hands kept the deck, conversing with lowered voices or listening for the dip of oars. All was dark

on board ; from small distant sounds, men were sensible of the neighbourhood of other craft.

Midnight passed, no bell was struck, the hour-glass had been let run down, the dark hours were thinning out, and still the fog held. Never was sea more still ; the brig rolled slightly at times, but for an hour on end not a sheaf creaked. Thrice had the lead been hove in silence and with extreme precaution, but bottom had not been found at a hundred and fifty fathoms. There was no bringing a ship up in such soundings.

Sue, wrapped warmly in her cloak, dozed beside the binnacle, but awakened with a sense of something novel and impending. The night-long, unnatural dumbness of the sea had yielded to a soft, recurrent lapsing whisper, the sounds of small waves that mounted and slid away from something firmer than one another's sleek shoulders.

A grayness gathered above the trucks, or where the trucks should have been, and from this grayness came down the short yapping barks of a bird circling overhead.

Furley stiffened at the sound like a pointer upon a scent ; he knew that this was an unfamiliar cry, but the sound conveyed no definite meaning to him. Seamen, unless their fear of the supernatural is aroused, are curiously incurious as to strange sights and sounds at sea ; whatever inquisitiveness he may possess or display is snubbed out of a lad during his apprenticeship by duller elders.

But to one man on board these bird-notes spoke clearly of cliffs and splintered pinnacles. "*Sheabhag*—not a doot on't. Wull ye pairmet me a meenut, Mistress Tighe ?" asked Chisholm, and had gripped the ratlins before the lady knew that he had left her. Up and up went he with the deliberate, elastic energy of the mountaineer turned seaman ; 'twas not his first essay ; he made light of the futtock-shrouds, and held upon his way through layers of white gauze which thinned and brightened above him as he climbed, until, with his feet upon the cross-trees, he found his head above the fog, blinking, gaping upon a sight that caught his breath. A floor of cloud, white and opaque as wool, extended as far as his eye could reach, pierced here and there in the distance by the loftier spars of the convoy, becalmed and heading to every point of the compass. But close at hand, and menacingly near, was the rocky summit of a headland or islet, he knew not which, backed up by stony heights ending in a mountain, Apes' Hill, in short, that southern pillar of Hercules, which looms up over against its fellow, the warrior Rock, across the Strait. "Phew ! but we're close in !" whispered the lad, wincing at a sudden onslaught of the falcon, whose timely warning had aroused his vigilance. The bird, a swooping vision of

white bosom and blue back, swept open-beaked past his ear with blazing eyes ; the rocky ledges, her eyrie whence she had sprung in jealous alarm at the intrusion of the ship's top-masts, rang to her clamour. " I thank ye, kindly, ma bonnie bird ; 'tis you, and not our fine lookout, that have saved a strand—if it be saved."

" Maister Furley ! on deck there ! " he hailed. " We're taking the groond ! " His hail seemed to rebound from the floor of mist ; the cliff gave back his voice, but no answer came from below. He wondered.

One, and as a seaman would have known, an important feature of the scene, Chisholm overlooked ; he only recalled afterward the strong, gray strands of cloud which bound the lower hills, and how these were lifted in an arch to the southwest as though for the passage of some Presence. He descended into the fog below him with long strides, his mind full of the landfall ; Furley would get the boat off the main-hatch, he would lower her and tow off ; he, the lad, would volunteer for an oar—he had pulled many an oar on Shin. The running-gear dripped and pattered around him as he climbed ; he heard voices below him, and Mr. Sweetapple's raised for a moment and then hushed, but thought nothing of it, and stepped from the rail to the deck into the arms of a couple of Moors ! The ship was taken !

The rascals' boat was fast on the starboard side (he had used the port shrouds). His captors felt him for arms. Oh, the poignant misery of that moment ! They were extraordinarily young, mere boys ; a dozen like them, under the command of an older man, an evil-visaged blackamoor, had mustered the ship's company in the waist and were searching them ; others were below. The capture had been effected in such silence, and was being consummated with such haste, that any one could see that the thieves were in fear of interruption. This was no boat's crew from a felucca, but the sweepings of the nearest village under its Sheik, tempted by the visible proximity of a ship which had drifted inshore during the night. They could not hope to make prize of her in due form, to plunder her at their leisure, or to carry her into port, for they were no seamen, and knew nothing of her navigation, nor, if the fog lifted—and it might lift with sunrise—could they hope for an hour's grace from the *Paladin's* launch and landing parties. No, they would beach her, please Allah, and get her company to the back of the hills as fast as they could be driven.

The poor lad's first thought was for Mistress Tighe. The fog thinned for a moment, he saw her stand against the starboard bulwarks between the captain and the mate, whose

face was working, his shoulders rising and falling. "*They'll knife us all!*" he bleated. Furley, himself wholly collected, anticipated some ill-judged outbreak. "Where is that faith o' thine, friend Sweetapple? 'Tis a Falmouth Harbour faith, a Wapping faith, I doubts," he growled, clenching his eyes under an expanse of netted forehead in a spasm of inward prayer. They unclosed as from sleep, steady and calm, and met Chisholm's desperate, mute appeal across the deck. "Lord, open Thou the eyes of this young man! The navies of the Lord lie thick about us, my lad!"

A young Moor looked hard upon Susan, grinned, and forced up her chin with a brown finger. Her faith flickered. "Oh, Mr. Furley, I'd rather ye killed me; yes, than let the savages get me! Indeed, I could die now!" She sank upon her knees, burying her white, tortured countenance in the sea-frock of her friend, who laid a gnarled brown hand upon her head in fatherly reassurance. "Kill thee? nay, there shall not an hair of thee fall! I have His word for it. Nay, 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord'!"

The Anointer snorted impatiently, and clenched his fists in impotent fury. "Belay all that, ye swab," growled his skipper in his ear; "I tell ye the Lord'll be strikin' a blow for us d'reckly!"

As he spoke, the *reis* had him by the windpipe, flashing a long knife before his eyes. "*I shall not d——*" gurgled the captive, purpling, but governing his hands and rigid in his extremity.

"Inshallah," muttered the ruffian dubiously, relaxing the cruelty of his grip, and then, as an afterthought, slashing the bald crown across with the back of the knife; no heavy cut, just a hint as from master to slave for the latter to hold his tongue. Blood ran down the skipper's temples and behind his ears: he raised his head to clear his eyes. "Into Thy hands, O Lord!" he breathed. The Anointer watched him from beneath eyelids which quivered; the Quaker crew stood as pale and still as statuary. Sue felt a drop of blood fall upon her hand and glanced up, shuddered strongly, but held in the shriek; some flicker of faith in Furley remained with her.

How long did this last? Chisholm and she could never agree upon this point. Moments of peril are very long moments: one sees so much, hears so much, and feels more still; one hopes, regrets, devises, despairs, fast and desperately, all within a minute.

The youth forgot his own fate in the frightful possibilities confronting the woman whom he had learned to love. Once their eyes met across the deck, and her pitiful attempt at a

smile almost drove him beyond his promise. He dared not risk a second glance, and compelled himself to watch that row of rigid Quaker faces. The great, brave visage of the captain, streaked with blood though it were, was an inspiration to the youth, it seemed informed with an expectation which was equivalent to certitude. A gleam of sunlight seemed to rest upon it although the fog was as thick as ever. The *reis* was sorting his first gang of prisoners, marshalling them towards the boat alongside; slavery had already begun; Furley seemed to heave a load off his chest and smiled. What had happened? Nothing. What then was about to happen? A sheaf creaked, a wet brace tautened, a shower of heavy fog-dew fell, a topsail shook the water from the torpid folds that had been gathering it all night: that was all. Then, sudden as the passage of a shoal of affrighted fish, the dumb sea alongside hissed to a passing flaw, the walls of fog rocked, the network of rigging aloft sent down the weird whine of strained cordage, the sails filled with a clap, everything was moving underfoot and overhead, the air was thick with voices. The masts trembled, for the ship was caught, but had no way upon her and failed to respond. Timbers groaned, standing rigging and running gear, shroud and halliard, brace and sheet, sheaf and tackle gave tongue according to its appointed note. And above all and through all, with the buffet of something alive and sentient and solid, and a voice of terror, came the butt-end of the wind.

Over careened the brig, her starboard-rail rising, her port scuppers sinking away underfoot, whilst the white squall, which had struck her, screamed like a wounded horse and rolled the torn blanket of fog into bales, which swayed hither and thither as the ship fell away to leeward, her gear flying in bights, adrift, unsteered, in danger of capsize.

"Slack away top'sl halliards! Let all fly!" bawled Furley, leaping to command. In one stride he was at the starboard poop-ladder. The blubber-lipped *reis*, galled at the loss of his booty, cutting at, but missing him as he passed. Chisholm lost sight of him, the lad was filled with an intense anxiety to be of service, and to do the right thing; the seconds seemed endless, the small crowded main-deck was full of staggering, clutching, over-balanced forms; the hands were busy at the cleats; the Moors who had hold of him dropped his arms, and scrambled whimpering up the steeply canted deck to where their leader and his men were clambering over one another to regain their boat. They reached it, cast adrift, and were tossing astern and out of sight before their friends below could reach the deck.

But Chisholm had no thought for their panic; Sue, at the

end of her fortitude, had come sliding down the deck into his hands, and he must get her to safety.

It was during these crammed and throbbing moments that the *Mary of Yarmouth*, emerging from the fog, drove close under the stern of H.M.S. *Snorter*, was recognised and hailed, but returned no hail, and next instant was lost again. Furley reached the tiller and set his hand to the tackles, but found the mate at his side. "My trick, Sweetapple—get forrard—get sail off her!"

"Bos'n forrard—hands knows their work," rapped the other, gripping the port tackle resolutely. "This be a two-man trick, Furley, wi' a follerin' sea hellum'll kick some-thin' crool; if she broaches, 'tis all up!"

Both men were shouting, but their voices sounded weak and pithless in the turmoil. Furley knew that his mate spoke truly, and forbore his point. The men faced one another, straddling and straining with feet braced against such purchases as they could reach. Twice in the first three minutes they were pooped by waves as fierce as white wolves, so quickly and so dangerously was the sea getting up, but they had got the ship before the wind. They knew that the topmasts were bending, could hear the jar when the yards came down upon the slings, and the thunder of loosened canvas struggling against the weight of a whole watch upon the clews, and knew by the feel of it—for little was to be seen, the sea-roke driving with them as they drove—that sail was being reduced.

The gale itself lent a hand, blowing the main-topsail out of its bolt-ropes with the sounds of an irregular volley of musketry. Chisholm saw the rags flit over the crest of a wave like a covey of ptarmigan down the sides of Ben More.

"Please Providence her fore-top-s'l'll goo tew!" prayed Furley. "Ah, there't goo!" as the second great sail ripped, crackled, and exploded. The little craft, no longer overpressed, took her work more easily, rose to the seas instead of burying her nose in them. Her waist was now sometimes free from water. Her steersmen could breathe.

"Now she'll about dew," panted the skipper, "if so be as any blame craft ain't makin' a board acrost us. Keep her before it, Sweetapple; once she broaches-tew the sticks'll goo. No'east by east's the course. Now——" The set of his jaw relaxed for the first time since the squall had struck them and a glow of triumph suffused his features. "Now, mate, did ye iver? I arsts ye fair? Merrycles o' mercies! Dint I tell ye Providence 'ud strike a blow?"

"Humph," growled the Anointer grudgingly, his eye

upon his skipper's bare, streaming noddle, whereon a big bruise, a little blood, and more spindrift made a butcherly show, "I did ketch summut about hairs and heads."

"And mine's bald, soo the Lord's angel hev kep his word," countered the other, scoring. "An' not a hair o' *your* wig's adrift, anyways."

CHAPTER VI

THE FALLING AWAY OF THOMAS FURLEY

THE Mediterranean, popularly supposed the bluest of seas, can upon occasion be black as very ink. This was its aspect late in the afternoon, when, the sou'-westerly gale having blown itself out, the wind had veered round to the north. Pinchingly cold it blew from the sierra which showed at times above the yellow topsails of a fleet of clouds sailing slow in close order like ships in line of battle. Overhead was a roof of dun scud, whence hail fell at intervals as the two weathers fought above the sea, and beneath it the *Mary of Yarmouth* jogged south again after her morning's work. Grumbling and croaking to herself she went on, hardly back into her self-respect. So goes a plump, middle-aged dame who has been chased by hooligans and can neither forget nor forgive.

A slow ship and a wet ship she was that watch, for though the wind was now abaft the beam, she met the full run of the sea, and her deck was ever awash. The glossy darkness of the great, whale-backed rollers laced with loops and stitcheries of white and yellow foam, met the bluff bows of the little craft with sounding thumps, and seemed disposed to try their luck at times, throwing boarding-parties upon her fo'ksle to tumble in cascades into her waist, and wash as far aft as her main-hatch.

Out of the wind and the worst of the weather beneath the break of the poop sate the prisoners, seven young Moors. They were thinly clad in the long chemise that is the working dress of their race; cold they were, albeit the Quaker crew had lent them their coats and a sail to huddle under; depressed, too, by seven hours of sickness and the uncertainty of their prospect. This adventure had turned out ill for them; they expected no mercy. Young Chisholm had taken their weapons from them during the gale, but, had they been armed, there was no fight in them. It was in this

plight that Sweetapple found them when he came upon deck after a needed spell off, to relieve the master, who had worked a double watch.

He blinked at the stinging breeze, glanced aloft at the drawing sails, down at the sloppy deck, overside at the lumpy water, marbled by the leavings of the gale, and nodded tight-lipped greeting to his chief.

"And what be we to do with these here blackamoors?" he asked. The strangers were almost as fair as Englishmen, but to the mate blackamoors they should be—the wretches had attacked without provocation, had hustled and frightened him; Sweetapple was a part of the ship.

"I be a-comin' to my own inclusion as to that," replied the skipper guardedly. The mate ran on:

"We could have made a nicetish bit out on 'em in Algeciras but for these here war troubles. That there Mustee in the middle be wuth money; and that little Fino Mustee next him. That's a Terceroon de Indies, I take it—a gret up-standin' chap—him by the ladder; cheap at twenty pound—not a Sambo among the lot. Ah! they'd fetch a pretty penny in Lisbon if so be we could get there wi'out deenger o' bein' took and sold ourselves. Best, p'raps, to knock 'em over the head and ha' done."

"Zabulon Sweetapple," growled Furley, "seems to me as thee be in the gall o' bitterness. Barrin' my own, there shall be no head knocked aboard my ship this v'ye. Wot says scriptur, Second o' Kings, six, twenty-two? *'Wouldst thou smite them whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and thy bow?'* How much less the Lord's captives?"

"Can't see as the cases be similar," rejoined Sweetapple, shutting his eyes and wagging an obstinate head.

"They been't, I owns," admitted Furley, "and soo, arter tarnin' things over, I be come to this, tew drop 'em quietly overside."

This proposal, so astonishing in the mouth of a Quaker, was made without the least inflection of tone. The Suffolk drawl was carried through to its high terminal whine. Nor did the speaker's eye bewray him, nor the form of his face: only at the portal of lips softly held ajar, a pink and healthy tongue-tip showed for an instant and was withdrawn again.

Sweetapple opened his eyes, glanced up in doubt, but was too late for the show and was reassured.

"That's sensible; now you're talkin'. There be suthin' in you Quakers arter all!"

"'Nough o' that, friend!" growled the other, "I be free to tell thee thy tongue's tew long by half. Once or twicst durin' the heavy weather if I'd a-bin another sort o' man nor

what I be, and hadn't a-had to hang on that there tiller-fall, *I'd a-fetched yew a b—dy whisk o' the ear!* ”

“Stiddy, Mister Furley,” cried Sweetapple, backing away. “I meant no offence, I'm agreein' with ye. Overside's the place for 'em, not but what my plan's quicker and quieter. They'll holler a bit naterally, and they'll be apt to lay hold on things. And there's the young female's feelin's to consider.”

“I'll consider 'em when the time comes, Friend Sweetapple; meanwhile, thee'll jes' leave the job tew me, will thee?”

This the Anointer promised the more readily that whilst bearing an Englishman's grudge against foreigners in general, and blackamoors in particular, he had no relish for mishandling these unfortunates, and more than doubted if any man among the foremast jacks would lend him a finger.

“Who's bin feedin' 'em?” he asked testily, detecting crumbs. “Mistress Tighe? tut! tut! this here tenderheartedness is all werry well, but when it comes to victualling the dyin', in a figure—criminals left for death——”

“I dew sim tew remember summut about feedin' one's enemies, tew,” hazarded Furley vaguely.

“Ah, yah; that's the letter, as you Quakers is so fond on: now, we Anointers walk in the sperrit, Mr. Furley, and when it comes to a pack of thieves——”

“Dyin' thieves,” dryly interposed the skipper, whose scriptural references were at times allusive, and at others inconveniently textual. “And, now I think on't, Sweetapple, ain't there somewheres a passage about the Master and a dyin' thief? Yah—oop!” he yawned, perceiving Sweetapple's disposition to drop the subject, and began to strip his sea-coat. “We pumped till she sucked at eight bells, but she laboured and strained a bit in that weather; try again later, and call me if there be a shift o' wind. Sou'west's her course. Here, yellow boy, put that on thy back ontill I ask thee for it”; he laid his coat over the shoulders of a shivering Moor. With one foot down the waist-ladder, he turned to where the mate stood grimly contemplating the prisoners. “And when that droppin' overside comes, mebbe I'll be wantin' thee to lend a hand.”

“Sartainly, I'll do it cheerful,” responded Sweetapple, with perhaps less alacrity than his words warranted.

“Wind's fell light; weather clearin', and land's in sight from masthead, Mr. Furley.”

The skipper opened his eyes with a grunt.

"And we, that's myself and the fo'mast hands, 'd like to know what course you'll be layin'."

The skipper threw a leg over the side of his bunk and sat up.

"'Deck directly," said he. "Heave the lead and make ready long-boat for lowerin'."

Sweetapple's eyes were brimful of questions, to which the master's vouchsafed but one answer, "*On deck!*" As the panel slid to behind him, Furley arose and stood with bent head and folded hands.

"Lord," growled he in a deep husky bass, "I be a werry common man, and You've bin and laid a most oncommon course. . . .

"I be that afeared . . . that afeared . . . as I can't sca'cely carry on."

He stood thus for a full minute, with tightly closed eyes awaiting the dawning of some inner light. It would seem that none came. With a sigh he took a Bible from a locker and opened at random: a brown, thumbled psalm lay beneath his fingernail:

"Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day. The Lord shall be thy shield and buckler."

He started. "'Twarn't azackly fair. I be soo fond o' that bit 'twere sort o' bound tew oopen jes' there. Howsomever!" He stooped, drew on his sea-boots and took the deck.

It was a sparkling morning with a light breeze from the north. The coast-line, yellow beach, and blue rocks, lay clear under the leech of the foresail not six miles distant. The ship was running free, and would be well inshore under an hour.

The watch was at work upon the boat, a heavy clinker-built tub that lay upon the spare booms over the main-hatch. To get her out and lower overside would need all hands at the tackles. The men worked without heart, and with their eyes elsewhere, and had a good deal to say, though saying it under their breaths. Anon the covering-cloth was off, and all the miscellaneous raffle turned out which seamen habitually pack into a boat which, if wanted at all, will probably be wanted in haste; the boat lay with her lashings cast loose, ready for hoisting out of her chocks. A dozen times the eyes of the men had turned to their skipper, with mute or muttered remonstrance. Impassively he overlooked their work from the rail at the break of the poop. Now, since the land lay but two miles ahead, and still he held on, the loose discipline of the merchant jack, strained over-taut, gave sign of parting. The hands below turned out in ones and twos, and conferred with the watch on duty. Finally the whole ship's company.

even to the cook and the boy, came aft slowly, and with dragging feet and some pushing of the best men to the front. The bos'n nudged Sweetapple, the latter spoke.

"Yer parding, Mr. Furley, but we've got summut to arst ye. What be we a-doin' in here? 'Tain't our natural course. Lee shore 't be, and failin' wind. That there's Barbary—Riff coast, ain't it?" Furley nodded. "Where these here blackamoors come from——"

"That's so," interposed the skipper, "and where, if Providence be agreeable, they've got tew goo back tew. As Christ'n men us can't do no less than see 'em safe home again."

The speaker's mouth closed tight upon it as the lid of a locker, but fifteen pairs of lips fell apart in sheer astonishment. This was carrying principles beyond all reasonable limits. Sweetapple found his voice, high and querulous,

"Di'n't you promise me you'd put 'em overside?"

"An' dint *yew* promise tew lend a hand?"

"I may ha' done, but——"

"Tha's all right then; evident we shall get on swimmin', 'cause that's our very next job, yewrs and mine, friend Sweetapple. We'll jes' lower that there boat, put th' enemy abroad, pull into fleet water and *put 'em overside*."

"But—but—I reckoned——" stammered the Anointer reddening.

"N' mind what yew reckoned; what yew had in that black onchristian heart o' yourn was vi'lence, Zabulon, n'more, n'less. But, praise Gawd, Providence hev bin one tew many for ye. Luff, there!"

The brig rounded-to as the helmsman spilt the wind out of her two big square-sails. The watch backed the foreyard and laid the ship to. The long-boat took the water kindly.

"Four hands for the oars," said Furley. "Who'll speak first? What, none on ye? Come, Friend Zabulon, seems as if thee and me——"

"Not me, Mr. Furley; I've a wife at New Cross."

"She'll take to thee none the worse for thy doing the Lord's will for once instead o' pratin' about it. Howsomever, if thee won't, thee won't; but one thing thee shall do, for ye sets store by Scripture, ye 'Nointers—bag o' bread here—and I'd have thee turn up Second Kings, six, twenty-two again, end o' the passage: '*Set wittles before them, and let hem goo unto their master*.'"

"That'll be the devil, sure-ly; for if he don't get sech swine as these here, I don't see no good in havin' a devil at all," and Zabulon Sweetapple, having delivered his soul, made it plain that he did not feel called to make one of that boat's crew.

"Keep the deck, then, ye onforgiving swab, ontill I be back again. What? is the Lord's arm shortened? . . . Thee, Sam'mle? . . . Thee, Abraham? . . . There! . . . I dew sim to fare right asheemed on ye," said the skipper, the East Anglian twang deepening as his anger grew; "Whooy, if ye'd only let him, that there rawskle booy'd come along o' me. Wouldn't thee, Titus?"

But the person thus singled out for an honourable service to which he felt himself unequal, reddened, wriggled, and at a second appeal, blubbered aloud:

"'Scuse me, sir—ub—but I don't want they niggers for to ketch me—ow!"

"What's the odds to thee where thee lives who've got ne'er a fambly to keep?"

"Please, sir, I couldn't nohow stand the grub, and they do say as there's a mort o' rope's-end in Algiers, *and noo marryin' neither—ow!*" Tears fell fast. Furley gnawed his lip. Was there, or was there not a small laugh behind him, swift and sweet? Chisholm's hand was upon his sleeve (Sue's had lain upon the lad's a moment earlier).

"I am with ye, Maister Furley; I can pull some."

"And I can steer," added Mistress Tighe, a vision of radiant courage, her eyes shining like stars under gloriously uplifted brows.

"*Yew?* and *Yew?*" stuttered the skipper, surprised beyond reach of his painfully acquired pronouns, "Good for iver! . . . Looky here, 'Out o' the mouths o' babes and sucklings hath He ordained praise!' Yes, us three'll take the job on, and shame the devil and the Anointers."

He was overside whilst speaking, Chisholm followed; the girl sprang upon a water-cask, and was into the main-chains in a moment. Forgetful of self, there she stood awaiting the movement of the boat beneath her: one little hand grasped a shroud, its fellow restrained her frocks. Never had Chisholm seen her to better advantage: his heart came high in his throat at sight of such gallant grace. The boat lifted; he threw up his hands; she stepped off into the air smiling, and for the second time he had her in his arms. Gravely sweeping her skirts aside, she seated herself in the stern-sheets and shipped the tiller.

'Twas too much for one of the crew, the uncouthest of the batch. "Put the gal aboard again, skipper. Swap-me-bob, I'll sign on for't, hit or miss."

Furley ignored this belated repentance; his heart was hot within him; that Friends, men of his choice, those in whom he had trusted should fail him, should give no credence to the heavenly vision which had borne him up and was still bearing,

was bitter. What he withheld, those well-conceived and richly decorated denunciations which he did not utter—only the Recording Angel, who scored them to his credit, knows. With congested features, hot eye, and rigid upper lip, he bade Sweetapple pass down to him the biggest of the Moors. The creature came passively, and was seated upon the bottom-boards forward, with his back to the stem. The next was set upon his lap, and the rest, in turn, each upon the knees of the man behind him, and that bag of ship-bread laid across the legs of the last, holding all down.

Furley having applied to the question of stowage what a subsequent pietist has described as sanctified common sense, surveyed his cargo.

"'Twon't shift, I reckons, though mortal down-by-the-head. Anyhow, 'tis a short v'yage, and we be in Providence's hands."

He spat upon his own. "Cast off," said he, and stepped the mast, hauled up the lug, belayed the halliard, and sate him down aft, sheet in hand. "Shove her off, Mr. Chisholm."

The lug flapped and filled, the boat heeled slightly and gathered way; they were off. Was ever such cruise undertaken by christened men?

"Good-bye, skipper! Good-bye, sir! Good-bye, madam!" cried the hands. The boy blubbered aloud.

"Ha'e the poltroons gi'en us ower already?" asked young Chisholm crossly, his own heart dark with doubts as to the issue of this adventure for the lady and himself.

"Don't blame 'em, sir," said Furley mildly—he had recovered his temper—"they hain't had my expairiences, ye see."

Fell a breathing silence. The three servants of duty aft watched the perspective of faces, expressionless and inscrutably alien, and as alike as sheep. What would happen when these creatures found themselves at home, and their unarmed captors in their power?

Meanwhile the wind served, the coastline opened, salient features detaching themselves. With sapphire water beneath her, and darting fish, the boat ran in through a gap in an outlying reef, opening natural harbourage beyond, smooth water rippling over a bottom of yellow sand, ringed by a curving bight of towans backed by bosky hills. A silent place, sunlit and lonely, its one sign of human occupation a white-walled *kubba*, the ruined shrine of some Moorish saint.

Sue found the submissiveness of their passengers unnatural and ominous, nor had it occurred to either of the men that the rascals had lost their reckoning during the gale, and now supposed, if their fatalism permitted them to suppose any-

thing, that this landfall was some country of the Giaours, where their slavery would now begin. Seated as they were, with faces seaward and eyes below the level of the gunwale, they saw nothing of the coast until the water having shoaled to half a fathom, Furley lowered the sail and, stepping forward, swung the bread off the legs of the nearest Moor and bade him arise.

"I be sarving thee main well, young man," said he, with touching confidence that he was being understood. "And trusts thee're sensible of the same. Pay it back, pressed down and runnin' over tew some pore Christian soul in Barbary, where thee be free to goo now as soon as thee likes. Up and off wi' thee—sho!"

He spoke as if driving fowls from a flower garden; but, as the man addressed failed to respond, put forth a massive hand, and gently put him overside into the water where the creature stood waist-deep and gaping, holding to the gunwale.

"There, git along, bor, and be a good chap for the rest o' thy nateral life." The man waded shoreward, going as if in a dream. Two others followed passively.

Then, all suddenly, came danger. The fourth, an older and grimmer man, upon gaining his feet, glanced behind him and saw his three fellows stand at the tide's edge free men; saw too, and recognised the *kubba* and knew his bearings. With joyous outcry he swung his arms and began to gabble to the three seated figures, who gabbled in return, and strove to free their feet. The boat rolled awkwardly, while the freedmen upon the beach uttered cries and began to return. The affair might yet have gone ill. Furley took it all in: stooping, he took the tiller from Sue's hand, and drew it from the rudder. "I be main sorry, young feller," he said, "but seemin'ly thee've no manners, and soo long as I commands I must and will have *dissyplyne*." Crack! the oak-staff descended upon the shaven crown of the mutineer, who promptly sate him down again.

The skipper regarded him sternly. "Yew knows how to 'have yewrself, and yew *shall* 'have yewrself soo long's yew be abroad o' my ship," he said, fully persuaded (as so many of our countrymen would seem to be) that a foreigner's preference for his own tongue is largely obstinacy, and that he can, if he chooses, comprehend English spoken slowly and distinctly. The charm worked, the beaten man gazed stolidly to his front, refraining even from comforting his head, and at the end of a long minute, to the endurance of which Sue contributed a priceless silence, Furley gave signal, and the fellow stepped over into the water. "Salaam," said he, and passes out of our story. His mates followed, the last laden with the

bag of bread. Then was the lightened boat put about, the mast unstepped, oars run out, and they headed for the brig. All drew lighter breath, the tightness was gone, and the constriction across the brows, yet Furley's face was grave, "I shou'n't a-hit him. 'Twere needful for dissy-plyne, mebbe, but it sorter spiles the job."

"You beat Titus last week for swearing, sir," said Sue, by way of administering comfort. "Let us call this foreigner a boy; he is but that at heart."

"The booy?" growled Furley. "It done him good. . . He wants it. . . . And thee begged him off, Susan; thee mainly does when I whops him." Susan smiled, but—as her friend's face did not clear—"I doubt if Mr. Sweetapple can have seen it, even through the glass," she remarked, as if to herself. The skipper brightened.

BOOK VI

CRISIS

CHAPTER I

GIBRALTAR

MOST of us can picture Gibraltar, its western aspect at least, the town side. We know it in Stanfield's oils, in line-engraving, in photograph and the picture post-card—the long, white curtain-wall between the blue bay and the climbing streets behind, the gray-green rock over all seamed with traverses and emplacements screened by dwarf palm and scrub; the "Queen of Spain's Handkerchief" floating above its topmost point.

If you were ever "up the Straits," or on "the Portingale voyage" (like the sons of the wicked uncle of *The Norfolk Tragedy*), you will have gone ashore for an hour, "done" the cathedral, the fruit market, the Alamèda, and little else, for so wisely secretive is our system that to it the simple British ratepayer is a man suspect; only to an eagle-faced Kaiser and his peeping, whispering aides are shown the secret galleries, the barbettes, rifling, and breach-action of our guns of position.

And with all your seeing you have not seen the other side of the Rock, its two-mile-long wall of cliff, some of it with its feet in the sliding desert sands which the Levanters bring across from Africa, some of it soaring sheer from deep water, all, every rod of it, scarped by art and nature in such sort that the monkey-fingered middies of the fleet have never "done" it, nor ever will.

Look up there (with my eyes, if not with your own). What do you see at the southern end of that prodigious rampart? At the top O'Hara's Tower cuts the skyline, a glittering white

finger, and plumb below, half-way between it and the restless blue water, is a mark upon the face of the cliff, a demilune, a little old-fashioned battery, pieced for a pair of footy, muzzle-loading ship's guns. The whole affair is but a niche blasted out of the sheer face, only to be reached by a path (invisible from below) winding down from aloft.

The work is so small, so remote, that from the summit it appears near the sea-level, from the sea below it seems near the summit. It is seven hundred feet from either. This is the Mediterranean Battery, and of it a tale is told.

Months before the *Mary of Yarmouth* fell among thieves, in the September of the year of our Lord 1778, Great George being upon the throne and served by greater men, or the sun of Britain had surely set, Sir George Eliott was Governor of Gibraltar, and had troubles of his own.

There was bad blood between the two corps, and that is the plain truth of the matter. What it began about, what were the rights of it, nobody knew: the fact remained that between His Majesty's 12th Regiment of Foot and Hardenberg's Hanoverians, a grudge subsisted, sore, embittered unreasonable.

Nor was the dispute left to the rank and file, the officers' messes were not upon speaking terms. One or the other should by rights have got the route; but it was far from easy to shift a corps from a distant garrison in the old sailing-ship days; thus things were awkward at "the Rock" in 1778-1779.

The Governor took his measures—he was a stern man was Eliott; the disputatious fellows were quartered as far apart as the limits of the Rock permitted, the Hanoverians lay in Irish Town by the Water Port, their rivals out by Europa Point. Bounds were set which the privates of the hostile forces crossed at peril of the Provost Marshal's triangles. Yet, meet they did: men on fatigue delivering wood at their officers' quarters would encounter one another among the steeply graded streets midway, and where they met they fought.

Nor were their leaders wiser. Until the long bicker between St. James's and Versailles culminated in ruptured relations, which were followed by a cartel from Madrid ("What hurts my brother hurts me"), these civilly belligerent officers and gentlemen had been used to arrange meetings behind the Queen's Seat, or would get leave to see the bull-fighting across at Algeciras or at St. Roque with ulterior motives. If, as happened more than once, one of the party returned with a

puncture, the mischance was laid at the door of some nameless Spaniard.

The Governor doubted, threatened to stop leave, and whilst the threat hung a-poise like hawk over stubble, lo, the darkening war-cloud rumbled overhead, and, albeit hostilities were deferred for another seven months, all leave stopped automatically. This was in November 1778.

Hitherto these affairs had been confined to subalterns, but at this juncture it pleased a Hanoverian major, Von Toppler by name, to put a public affront upon a gentleman of equal rank serving in the 12th. A meeting was judged essential to honour. They met at Catalan Bay, that tiny fishing hamlet beneath the eastern cliffs, and the German, an adept at the small sword, fell at the first pass and died where he fell.

This was worse and worse; a long and evenly contested bout ending in the temporary disablement of one or both combatants might have appeased the worse and aroused the better feelings of all concerned, paving the way for a general reconciliation; but a momentary rally, a scramble, a disputable thrust in tierce, a movement of the left, too, which though involuntary was clearly *hors de règle*, merely inflamed the matter. The English second was rated in unwarrantable terms; things would have gone farther, but the patrol intervened.

The Governor got wind of it: there is no explaining away the violent death of a major of His Majesty's forces in a garrison which is not under fire.

Behold, then, the survivor and both seconds, after court-martial and much hard swearing, put upon half-pay. They sail for home; the vacancies in the two regiments have been filled in due course—Major Wade Justin gazetted to the one, Major Cornelius Boyle to the other; they arrive in the same man-o'-war. (Their juniors—Travis and Scrivener—this to fill the blank in the English—that in the German corps, had preceded them by the April convoy.)

His Majesty's frigate *Paladin* has dropped anchor off the Ragged Staff; her attendant gun-brigs, *Snorter* and *Hawk*, are still hull-down beyond the Pearl Rock, rounding-up the last and slowest of the Falmouth convoy. The frigate's launch is at the Waterport, oars shipped; passengers are preparing to land, two gentlemen, and a lady, who sits between her companions, with her back to the sea-wall and its mooring-rings, a bright-eyed woman of thirty in unobtrusive mourning, buxom, arch, and accustomed to compliments. One would have judged from her manner that whatever the depths of her grief might have been, its first poignancy was past. The

lady was enjoying life once more, had been amused by the novel experience of her first voyage and the flattery and attention which had fallen to her share upon the King's ship.

To the captain's cabin and the wardroom she had bidden a smiling good-bye, but her delightful perplexities were not yet over—two of her admirers accompanied her ashore, were at that moment at her elbows. One, the larger and more voluble man, who has been keeping the lady in a condition of decorous merriment, bethinks him of his own affairs and is for decently disencumbering himself of hers in advance.

"And now, my dear leedy, the moment has come for parting; 'sweet sorrow,' the pote calls ut, and in this case rightly, for 'tis but timporary, I trust. An', by the way, permit me to proffer ye my assistance in any little arreengements which yer melancholy juties and onprotictud condition may devolve ye in."

"Major Boyle, I am sure you are too kind," simpered the lady.

"Not at all," cried the gentleman airily. "'Tis a bargain thin. I will do meself the honour of calling upon ye, madam, as soon as my military engeegements permit": he half arose, bowing. "And now, me dear madam, I'll refrain from engeeging yer charming attintion; 'tis not the hour for pleasantries; yer fut is upon the threshold of new experiences; 'tis a mimorable moment in yer young life. First imprissions, my dear leedy, are priceless—let me advise ye to be garnering thim; use your beautiful eyes, close yer charming lips, and husband yer resources."

"La! Major, whatever are you saying?" cried the lady, whose attention had been wandering. "*Husband?* and my poor dear colonel not twelve months in his grave!"

She simpered coquettishly. The man upon the other side of her wondered; never had she appeared to less advantage. He felt his lip curl and, half-turning in his seat, glanced out-board to hide his face.

He sat upon the lady's left; the Irishman had risen; a little ungloved right hand was dipping its finger-tips in the water alongside, the tortoise-shell hook of a parasol lay over the gunwale. As the launch, now no longer under steerage way, swung in towards the stonework the silent watcher saw with a start what might happen.

"*Hands inboard, there,*" yelled the middy at the yoke-lines. The lady, still held in chat by her loquacious admirer, either did not hear or failed to understand that she was the person addressed. "*Madam!*" squealed the boy; she, laughing gaily at a final sally, retained her position. There was yet the tenth of a second left for action; leaning behind her, the

English Major made a snatch at her wrist, caught it roughly, the boat, lifting upon the swell, jarred dully against the green, weed-coated stone. Something crushed. The lady shrieked. The middy shut his eyes. She was caressing knuckles rasped by nothing severer than a man's grip.

"Sir! How dare you? I never!"

"Justin! May I ask what ye mean by this conduct?" said the Irishman in silkiest accents, his eyes sparkling under twitching brows.

"Begad, sir, 'twas mighty well done!" broke in the lieutenant in charge. "You saved the lady's hand. See here, madam, what your five fingers would have been like." He was pointing to the parasol-handle crushed flat between the gunwale of the heavy launch and the unyielding stonework.

"Oh, Major Justin, how can I thank you enough?" exclaimed the lady, a little breathlessly.

"It isn't necessary to say anything more about it, madam; but if ye will permit me to escort ye to your lodging I shall feel abundantly repaid. I bespoke ye a porter by the first boat. I see the fellow awaiting us at the top of the steps: allow me."

He had not replied to his angry rival. The obvious event had done that for him. Taking courteous possession of his fair prize, he passed the Waterport envied and admired by the crew of the launch.

"Handy enough for a King's ship; pity he's to be wasted ashore," grunted a jack, pulling stroke, who had seen all.

"And who might those fine, new, live officer-passengers of yours be?" asked an orange-woman of the lieutenant, an old acquaintance. The lieutenant told all he knew. "Whew!" whistled the dame, and shifted the quid in her cheek. "Then the fat's in the fire again, sir! More bloody doin's afore the month is out, as sure as there's monkeys on the Rock."

Next morning, in the anteroom at the Convent, the new-comers were awaiting the Governor's leisure to report themselves. They sate in silence. Officers of the garrison passed in with their "morning states," returned with their orders. The *levée* was thinning, their turns would come soon.

An orderly, who before he enlisted must surely have been a town crier or master of ceremonies, came to the door, throwing a chest. "*Ma-jor—*"

The Irishman got his feet under him, "*Justin!*" He extended them again with a smothered oath. The Englishman arose and followed the man to the presence.

Governor Sir George Eliott, whose business it was to know his men, looked the new-comer over with interest; his broad, sea-bronzed mask of a face was made up to an enduring

patience ; he foresaw an awful time ahead of him ; he wanted men, *men* ; King George sent him broken gamblers, disgraced fribbles, the culls and incapables of their services, rubbish. The Rock was the most unpopular of stations. He recognised in Justin a man after his own heart, and beamed upon him.

" Sir, I am glad to make your acquaintance." The greeting reached the ears of those in the anteroom through an imperfectly closed door, and one at least of the listeners cocked an eyebrow.

" You served in Madras, I see, under my friend Coote ; I have heard of ye, sir, and all to your advantage. Ye are gazetted to the 12th with seniority, which is unusual. Ye came out in the *Paladin*, I believe ; had ye an agreeable voyage ? Had ye companions ? So—humph ! Who is without ?" A pause. " Send Major Boyle in."

" *Ma-jor Boyle !*" bawled the orderly.

The Irishman obeyed the summons with alacrity. He strode into the room and saluted, as fine a figure of a man as you shall see in a whole garrison : tall, splendidly set-up, fresh-complexioned ; the sparkle of hazel eyes lit up his face from under alertly arched brows. The Governor took him all in with a solemn regard. The jaw was too square and heavy, the mouth verged upon truculence. The head looked as round as a bullet and as hard. The man, one felt, would be an exacting friend, an encroaching comrade, a dangerous enemy, but for a night assault, a forlorn hope, no fitter fellow stepped.

His Commander returned his salute in silence, looked him over in silence, referred again to some writing, a private advice, apparently just arrived by Packet. He opened his lips.

" Step outside there, and shut that door." The orderly obeyed.

" Major Boyle, I make your acquaintance, sir ; I trust it may ripen into mutual respect. But I am bound to warn ye, sir, that your record has preceded ye."

The man addressed started, his rocky face flushed. The Englishman interposed. " Have I your permission to retire, sir ? "

" Ye have not, sir. I desire ye to remain. I am speaking to the two of ye, for your guidance, gentlemen, and for your good.

" You, Major Boyle, come to me from the 41st, but 'tis not your first exchange : ye served in the North Corks and also in the Fermanagh Fusileers."

" I did, sir. I was mentioned in despatches whilst serving with the Fusileers in Canada."

“And stood your court-martial, if I am not misinformed, for killing a brother officer.”

“And had my sword returned to me, sir; it was an affair of honour, properly seconded, everything in order.”

“You were the challenger, sir.” The man addressed allowed the statement to pass. The Governor continued: “But the unfortunate experience was wasted upon ye; it has not been your last of the sort, as it was not your first. Ye went out recently with a civilian, and still more recently with a Militia officer. Ye stood your trial at Chester Assizes, sir, upon the capital charge.”

“And was acquittud again, sir.”

“As I read this, the jury disagreed, which appears to have been a most fortunate circumstance for ye, for there were no seconds, I see.” He tapped the paper. “Well, sir, it seems that instead of putting ye on your trial again, the minister has permitted ye to exchange, has sent ye out to me. I am but little obliged to Mr. Jenkinson, if I may speak frankly.

“And now, sir, a word in your ear; ye have come to a hornet’s nest. There is some damned old senseless grudge between your regiments, gentlemen—yours and yours”—he nodded to each in turn. “The men have been confined to barracks this month past, but in this latitude a month is too much: it spells scurvy. After all is said, I must rely upon the regimental officers, upon you, just you. Your predecessors fell out and played the fool: Von Toppler and Stedman. They paid the penalty; one is in hell and the other on half-pay. But how am I to hold this place for my King if my own officers run one another through the gizzard for a wry word?” He paused, and his eye was severe. “Now, gentlemen, ye come upon the ground with clean sheets so far as this silly matter between the 12th and the Hardenbergs is concerned. Ye know nothing, and desire to know nothing, but my express wishes. Ye will start fair and take a posture that shall make for amity. Ye hear me?” Again the great soldier’s eye roved from one to the other; the Englishman was attending to him with an air of respectful concern, the Irishman’s countenance was a medley of pent emotions.

“Ye have enjoyed a favourable voyage: ye have made one another’s acquaintance under agreeable circumstances, and are about to take up your duties with nothing but the friendliest feelings between ye. This is so?”

“Certainly, sir,” replied Justin: the other assented less cordially, but assent he did.

“Then, gentlemen, I will ask ye to take one another’s hands, here in my presence—so. I am obliged to ye. I wish ye a good-day. Ye may go.”

The two officers reached the door of the Convent, passed the sentry, took a dozen steps side by side in a silence which the Englishman had no especial desire to break. His companion, as he perceived, was smarting under the rebukes of his new Commander. How would he bear himself?

Beyond earshot of the sentry the Irishman wheeled hotly upon the man beside him, "*Well?*"

Justin stopped, as was but civil, but awaited some more definite indication of the man's meaning. None was forthcoming.

"Major Boyle, as you apparently invite me to make some comment upon what I have heard, I will just say that so far as it touches yourself I have already forgotten it, every word of it. I beg to wish ye a good——"

"*For-got* ut, have ye?" mocked the other in a high-pitched, satirical tone. "I would hardly have thought ut. Your hearing is perfect, my dear sir; your ears are long enough, in all conscience!"

"And I have already forgotten *that* too," replied Justin in haste, and, turning upon his heel, left, pursued by a jeering laugh.

CHAPTER II

THE SIN THAT HATH NEVER FORGIVENESS

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed. The anteroom of the Convent on that early forenoon in late July was the scene of as many curiosities, pleasurable wonders, reserved admirations, and mute surmises as ten male bosoms are capable of sustaining.

The senior majors of the regiments in garrison were there to report to their commander-in-chief the morning states of their commands as shown upon the parades just dismissed.

There was Stokes of the Artillery, and Jessop of the 56th, Kellett of the 39th, and de Sélincourt of De la Motte's, Menzies of the 73rd (McLeod's), and others, good men and true, who were to stand starkly enough in the testing time that was at hand, but whose names have small meaning to-day. Among them was one whom we have seen before and whom we shall have more to do with anon.

They had come in twos and threes, expecting nothing out of the common. Conceive, then, their surprise at finding themselves forestalled, the *levée* not yet opened, the door of the Governor's room closed to them, and His Excellency reported to be in conference with a merchant captain and some civilian. So said the Governor's orderly, adding in an undertone that a third member of the party was still awaiting an audience ; the man's eye decorously directing his interrogator to a corner occupied by a lady.

A lady, no less. Now, ladies were few at Gibraltar, and, as it happened, not one of the ten majors was married. A lady ;—the bluff masculine greetings bandied about the room in the modulated tones demanded by that closed door were made and were succeeded by a self-conscious pause in the conversation, a hiatus which extended to a helpless silence, absurd and banal, for which each of the ten fell silently to blaming the other nine. Muted voices came from the inner room ; the minutes ran, yet none spake ; nor did the lady's

dropped veil and downcast eyes afford an opening, whilst with this petticoated stranger for auditor it seemed indecorous to moot a besieged garrison's one subject of conversation—the price of beef.

A lady, obviously young, and graciously shaped, and almost certainly pretty, nay beautiful; every man of them whose seat permitted him to use his eyes without offence was ready to swear that the lady was a beauty. (Would she but raise her veil!) The softly rounded and delicately tinted cheek impressed by her little hand gave warrant for the inference: so did the fineness of the neck beneath the ear, and the ear itself, overhung by one curling tendril of dark hair, setting off its translucency and modelling, just the perfect double spiral, suggestive of a fallen elm-leaf. Ah, men, men! How each of those good fellows sate thinking his own thoughts and cursing his luck, and shyly looked and softly longed, wishing everything were wholly different, and that she, and that he, and . . . for this lady sitting there so stilly, cheek upon hand, and with eyes that never were lifted, was sad, as it seemed, and was without doubt one of those woman-creatures whom our Lord God, the Master Potter, throws but once in a way, and who, when they come from His wheel, whether they will or no, stir the pulses of every man who looks upon them.

And still the voices came dully from behind the door.

Then from outside too came sounds, a softly whistled air, an Irish quick-step, and the ponderous but elastic tread of a strong and heavy man: the eleventh major, Boyle of Hardenberg's Hanoverians, strode into the room, and glanced about him.

The lady in her corner started and raised her eyes; he, coming as he came from the brightness without, noticed nothing, but the rest saw that she had lifted her veil and had arisen, and was moving from her corner towards the last comer, with outstretched, tremulous hands and the quick, small steps of the timid—"Con!" Her voice filled the room, its vibrant contralto thrilled all hearers like a plucked harp-string. The hearts of ten of the men rose to their throats. "Husband!" she cried, low yet piercingly: it was now the G string of a fine violin beneath the bow of a master, an appealing crescendo. It was borne in upon the hearts of the ten that here was a tragedy. But the actor whose cue it manifestly was made strange work of his part. The man's great jowl drew forward, his brows came together and darkened, his eyes sparkled, his cheeks crimsoned. With an unpardonable oath he swung upon his heel, giving the lady his shoulder as he sought to leave the room. She, on her part, had reached him, had him by the sleeve, by the skirt as he shook himself

free. He stepped back, dragging her with him ; oversetting her balance, she was now upon her knees, her beautiful face awork and pleading, her white column of throat convulsed. And all this had befallen in some five ticks o' the clock.

“ As strange a story as ever I listened to,” said the Governor, and indulged himself with snuff. His Excellency was a large, bluff-faced, strongly-built man in middle life, Scottish by descent, by degree a baronet of the United Kingdom, and a General by rank, and, by the providence of Almighty God, at this moment in charge of the Rock of Gibraltar for King George, the third of the name. What was his outward seeming in later life when, famous and ennobled, you may see for yourself by studying the great Reynolds in the National Gallery. “ The brick-red Titan with the Key,” men call it, and, certes, it has given many of us the impression that though force or fate might conceivably have torn arm from shoulder, or hand from wrist, while life lasted that key neither should, might, nor could in any wise be wrenched, twisted, or cut from its holder's grip. At the time of his coming into this my story he was neither great nor famous, nor with any prospect of being Lord Heathfield and a hero for all time. Nor to his immediates did he seem at the first sight especially heroic. Yet, as a good horse will run in any shape, so will your heaven-sent leader approve himself, if given his opportunity, in any form, even the homeliest. This, for example, which appealed to men as merely a large-boned North-Briton with an eye, later, with a temper also, and a rigorous curb upon it. Little by little, had you served under him during that awesome four-years siege, the real greatness of his soul would have been manifest, disengaging itself from the accidentals of form and garb, until he, who had started as a silent disciplinarian with some powers of concentration, towered at the last above his contemporaries as the incarnation of stubborn endurance, imperturbable patience, and inexhaustible resource.

“ A strange story,” he repeated, and closed the lid of his box, regarding quizzically the man before him, a squat, square, sea-bronzed sailor, master of a brig, which had been reported as lost, but had made the harbour that morning some days after the arrival of the convoy of which she had formed a member. Personal belongings of his own formed part of her cargo. The case was not free from suspicion ; 'twas war-time, and the Governor did well to be suspicious. He fingered this as he fingered all clues : the safety of his charge might depend upon his sagacity in reading riddles. Beside the mariner

stood a youth attesting his narrative, and with a story and claims of his own.

"My man, ye were reported to me as taken by the Moors under cover of fog, which agrees with your own account. His Majesty's marine gave ye small help, as I gather. But ye retook your ship, which was commendable; but, having done so, ye tell me that ye most foolishly and unjustifiably put the pirates ashore. What, man? 'Tis unbelievable! But that your turning up again proves your tale, none would credit ye. Ma conscience! Such doings smell of Bedlam. What said your company? Oh, they mutinied, did they? Small blame to 'em. And how got ye your friends ashore single-handed? What? This gentleman and yourself manned your boat *and a lady-passenger steered!* Now, why, in Heaven's name, in place of running upon such risks, did ye not bring the rogues to me to hang?"

"I sorter reckon, Sir George—friend, I would say, as every man dew best in's own country," replied Furley.

The Governor stared. "Sir, ye are plainly one of God Almighty's own jackasses, and I'll waste no words on ye." He purpled grimly, and sipped his toast-and-water. (An abstemious man, Elliott, who, knowing himself of a choleric disposition, dieted rigorously, and practised vegetarianism.)

"As for you, young sir, I know not what to make of ye. My last advices from Falmouth came by a fast Packet that sailed a week behind this convoy, and are to the effect that Ensign John Chisholm was drowned in the stranding of the transport *Mary of Shoreham*. Against that is the statement of the captain of the *Paladin* frigate that ye reported yourself to him by signal whilst at sea. Against that again I have the story of the first-lieutenant of the *Snorter*, who saw your brig adrift with her decks in possession of pirates; yet here ye present yourself alive, free and whole. Ma conscience! Ye have as many lives as a cat, and should go far, sir. I hardly know how to deal with ye, for ye come before me wanting everything—commission, arms, uniforms, ay, and the squad of reliefs which ye commanded." The lad quaked for his future, the great man hemmed and scrawled something with a quill. "By your Master's story ye can obey orders. Take this to the Lieut.-Col. McKenzie at his quarters, and report yourself for duty. Heh! What's this?"

A tremulous, high-pitched wail had pierced the closed door; it came from the anteroom.

"A woman," said Sir George testily. "I want no women here."

"'Tis a young female, sir; the lady as I was telling ye on—

a gal, sir, as I've giv a passage to. She be a-seekin' of her husband, sir; a Major Tighe," began Furley.

The Governor was making for the door; Chisholm, his pulses hammering, held it open. The room beyond was crowded with men in uniform awaiting audience; it was ringing with a woman's cries, bitter, heart-broken wails. Sue was upon her knees, clinging to the skirt of a tall and magnificent soldier, whose face displayed the liveliest emotions of anger and confusion, and who, whilst trying ineffectually to release himself and silence the girl, was furiously protesting in dumb show and again beneath his breath, that he knew her not, nor had ever set eyes upon her previously.

"In the sight of my Maker, I swear——" hissed the man; but the girl was not to be outfaced.

"Con, dear! Oh, Mr. Tighe! Major, darling. Oh, my dear, don't risk your poor soul upon such a wicked lie. Ye are my husband! Ye know ye are!"

"Faith, madam, I know nothing of the sort, and never to my knowledge——" The man's countenance was distorted and congested with rage. Since the recognition on the voyage he had looked for some kind of scene at its end, but the welcome news that Sue's ship had been taken had lifted the load from his mind; all was yet to go well; his luck was a wonder. Judge of his feelings, you, when on almost the first occasion of reporting the morning-state of his regiment he found himself confronted and claimed by his wife, in the embarrassing presence of near a dozen men of his rank. The emergency found him resourceless; he had handled it amiss from the first word. Instead of leading the lady politely aside, he had let himself be startled into heat, and had brutally repulsed her, ay, and with injurious expressions. He had set the room against him from the moment he had opened his lips. Whatever the lady might be, she was not, and could not have been, what he coarsely charged her with being. For some five minutes before his arrival her beauty, grace, and modest carriage had been winning the hearts of the men. Too late Boyle recognised his mistake; but saw no way to amend it. Time was running against him, priceless moments; unless these cries could be silenced before that door opened, the situation would be more than awkward. Oh, to throttle and beat! Impossible! The watching ring saw both in the man's bloodshot eye and stood ready to intervene.

But the door had opened. "Silence here!" boomed the deep voice of authority. Every man in the apartment saluted, even the perplexed and savage Boyle: only the woman disobeyed. She, oblivious of all save that she had found her master, knelt and clung and sobbed her passionate entreaties.

The Governor, a man whom no mischance of warfare could disconcert, was for one moment taken aback. He bent a swift, keen glance upon the pair, and decided (what he had just heard from Furley helping him) that here was no art, but a piece of nature: one of the two at least was not acting. The posture was the posture of womanhood in dire distress, the voice was the voice of a lady. A busy man, with a great charge upon him, he was yet human, and was sensible of some natural curiosity to make acquaintance with the heroine of an adventure wherein a woman had stood beside her captain when his crew flinched.

"Release him, madam; I will hear you. Bring her within."

Blinded by stinging tears, Sue saw nothing, nor was capable of hearing reason; but Furley's hands were laid upon hers with gentle insistence. His proximity calmed her: she could trust him.

"Cast him loose, my gal; His Honour bids thee. He'll listen to us, an' do thee right, never fear!" Lifting her to her feet, he drew her hand within his arm.

The door of the inner room closed upon the matter—a suit matrimonial preferred at a moment's notice. Who would be Governor upon such terms? Who would *not* with such women about? Within the anteroom nine men out of the ten turned wide-eyed and open-mouthed to one another for explanation, corroboration, and sympathy. It was no business of theirs, but the cry of a woman, and such cries, are the business of every man within call; and nine tongues wagged softly. But the tenth major sate silent, a small, neat-handed, well-groomed man, whom we recognise as our friend Wade Justin. He sate hearing only his own heart knock whilst the room buzzed softly around him. "He said," "She said," "My word, how he looked!" "Lord, what a figure!" He caught never a word of it, having all his work to hold himself together, to command hands and lips, whilst over and over within the back of a whirling brain the question, "*Is it possible?*" ran round and round like a wheel, and over and under it the words, "*So like, so like!*" ticked on and on like a death-watch in an empty house at midnight. For all that he knew he might have been alone in the anteroom. When the lady had raised her veil Justin had caught his breath; when her soft contralto call had pulsed across the room, the blood had flown to his head; voice, eye, face, figure, had brought him to his feet with his heart in his mouth, had swept away the mists of seventeen years and shown him again, as in a swift, waking dream, the lost love of his youth. He had hovered, watchful and tense, upon the verge of speech and action during those hot moments of claim and denial,

watching baffled affection beating itself to death against the spikes of brute selfishness. Surmising much, fettered by his ignorance, he had hardly restrained himself, and now knew that he had done well.

The Governor motioned the weeping girl to a chair. Furley and Chisholm steadied her into it: her agitation was piteous. The three men remained standing, the two upon Sue's either hand, the one as far from her as his dignity and the arrangements of the room permitted.

"And now, madam," said Eliott, "I will thank you to explain yourself; say what ye have to say, and as briefly as possible."

"Before these—civilians, Sir George?" demurred Boyle.

"As I understand the matter, sir, they are the lady's attestors. Am I right?"

"She can't dew wi'out me," drawled Furley, still holding the lady's hand in his immense paw. "Cheer up, my gal!" This last in a gruff whisper audible to all.

"'Can't do?' and why? Pardon me, Sir George, but this is like to be a ticklish matter for a man in my service. This injurious claim, ridiculous though it be, touches me very closely, and I fail to see what interest it can have to persons who are utter strangers to me."

"Do ye stick to that?" asked the Governor, observing repudiation leap simultaneously to the eyes of both the lady's backers.

"I do, sir."

"Then there yew be a point or tew off yar course, bor, as I'll precious soon show ye," drawled Furley.

"I have messed wi' Major Boyle a guid few times," said Chisholm guardedly.

Boyle snorted indignantly. "I doubt it, but it might be. I cannot recall the face of every subaltern in the service."

"They will remain, sir," said the Governor. "If ye can rebut the lady's charge, whatever it may be, their presence here will have done ye good rather than harm. Now, madam."

Sue had in some measure recovered herself; she was a girl of spirit. If the suddenness of the occasion in the anteroom had taken her unawares, she knew well that it now behoved her to fight with dignity and courage.

Palpitating she was, tingling and almost physically sore from the vehemence of her husband's rebuff, and as exquisitely mortified as a woman of delicate nurture must be who, surprised and carried beyond herself by love's urgency,

has bared, as it were, her very bosom's warmth and secret tenderness to the man of her heart, only to find herself spurned with insults: and this in the presence of male strangers; his friends belike. She shut her eyes tightly, and shuddered inwardly like a guilty thing at the thought of the indignity, the exposure of it. What must those gentlemen think of her?

The Governor's voice hummed in her ears; there was a sort of human comfort in it; he seemed a fatherly old person. Rallying at the pressure of Furley's great hand, and conscious of young Chisholm at her side, she drew the tattered rags of her womanly pride around her stripped shoulders, called dumbly upon her Maker, and opened her eyes. She had raised her veil, her little hands were a-work in her lap, her lovely countenance flushed and wet with tears, but with a steady voice she preferred her case. "He is my husband, sir; Major Cornelius Tighe is his name. I made his acquaintance in the stage, whilst travelling from Chester to London last December; the twelfth it was. My aunt had died; I was on my way to live with another aunt——"

"Yes, yes, come to the point," urged Sir George, with some natural impatience of details.

"And he was very civil, kind, indeed; and when we got to London it was all strange to me, for I was not met, and it was dark, and the hackney coachman was drunk and tried to have my purse. Also he took me to the wrong house, and oh, they told me it was my aunt's house, and that she was just buried. What made them tell such wicked lies I don't know, for it was some other woman's house, and she would not let me stop even for one night, sir. And Con, I mean Major Tighe, who happened to be passing—I don't know how, but he was, and had saved me from the coachman and beaten him—Con, sir, would have it that there was nothing for it but I must marry him at once, that very minute. He could give me the protection of his name, he said. And just then a clergyman happened to come in, and he said so too, and I was bewildered and lost, sir; and I am an orphan, and they were all round me at once, and it seemed so improper to pass the night in the street—all in the dark; and—and—and—I let the clergyman do it. Was I wrong?" She bent her head and wept gently.

"And ye are sure that this is the person?" asked the Governor.

"Oh, quite—quite sure. How can I doubt it? He was my husband. We lived together for—how long was it, Con? Weeks! And you were kind to me at first. Oh, Con, you know! But why did ye spend all my money and leave me? Why do ye deny me?"

And again that wonderful contralto moved all hearts in the room—save one.

"But I do deny it, madam," said Boyle hardily, coming forward with a stride and half turning to the Governor, who regarded him closely, and after a momentary pause asked whether he denied the marriage merely, or every circumstance of the lady's story.

"Every single circumstance, Sir George. I solemnly assure ye I have never set eyes upon the leedy until ten minutes back. There is no particle of truth in her tale, so far as regards myself, I mean—for I wish to spare the young person if it be possible. 'Tis plainly a case of misteeken identity. To begin with, my name is not Tighe."

"But your Christian name is, as I think, Cornelius?" remarked the Governor.

"A coincidence, merely, Sir George. The name is a common one in Ireland."

"But if yewr name was not Tighe, whoy did ye call yewrself Tighe when yew went and merried this here young female?" asked Furley, laying the lines upon the table. "I was there, yewr warship—m'lord—my friend, I should say. They called me in out o' the strit to give the gal away. I see her goo inter the house; I see this man a-follerin' of her. She sim'd a bit scairt, for she stuck her little head outer winder and sorter shruck tew me for help. Soo, in I gooed, and sorter saw fair play. 'Twere done t' rights, so far as I could make out; oh, the chap were a passon right enough. This here man promised this an' that, and there was a ring; and he sim'd to make out as how he done it all out o' the goodness and pity of his heart. But I'd my 'spicions; and—I say," wheeling suddenly upon Boyle, "d'jew remember what I says tew ye jes' afore yew left the house wi' this here lady?"

"I tell ye I've never met you before, my good man," replied Boyle blandly.

Without change of face, Furley crossed the room and took the amazed Irishman by the wrists. "Now, does thee rec'lect me?" The men's eyes met and remained as it were in contact, whilst their bodies rocked, and it was the bold, hard eye of the soldier that flinched first.

Many a time had Boyle beaten down an enemy's glance; few had found themselves able to endure the menace of his haughty stare when it pleased him to assume the bully, but now, and almost for the first time, the man found himself unable to meet the uncompromising thrusts of those steel-gray daggers which stabbed his brain from under the sea-captain's bushy brows.

The paralysing stricture of his adversary's grip infuriated

him, whilst distracting his attention ; it broke upon him that here was his master ; that this was a man who could have killed him with his naked fists. He blenched, and knew that he blenched, and that the Governor watched him, and noted.

The gage had been thrown down, picked up, and the duel fought and won in the space of three ticks of the Governor's clock.

"Sir George, what does this mean ?" protested Boyle, after one vehement but ineffectual effort to free himself.

"Release him, Master, and stand back," bade the judge. The burly, oaken-faced seaman obeyed. "The larst time as I had that there feller in the bilboes that way was when he'd a-got a jarvey down and seemed o' harf a mind for to dew for him. Oh, he rec'lects *me* right enough ; don't ye, bor ? . . . No ? . . . Ah, yah, I dew sim tew fare tew wish as yew'd *try* tew spik the trewth. Dint yew ship south by the brig, *Mary of Shoreham*, transport, Captain Cousins, from Bugsby's Reach, last Jenooary ? Ye 'can't remember'—no ? What, not the ship yew sailed in ?—but other folkses can ; I dew, for one, for I see yew and yewr kit goo aboard her. Yes, bor, yew may well oopen yewr eyes, tha's how we come to be on yewr tracks to-day." Boyle was silent. The Governor nodded.

"Mr. Chisholm, have you anything to add ?" he asked.

"This, Sir George, that on the voyage out the frigate *Paladin* passed us vara near upon one occasion, and it wass then that Mrs. Tighe recognised this gentleman and cried out to him ; and he . . ."

"D'ye dare to assert that I replied to her, or acknowledged her ?" interrupted Boyle.

"Not in so many words, sir, but ye reddened vastly, and steppit down frae the nettings michty quick, to avoid further recognitions, as it appeared to me."

"He did so ; I saw him," assented Furley, with the deep tone of a staunch old hound owning to a line.

"Fiddlesticks ! Moonshine ! Balderdash !—What shall we have next ? Your pardon, Sir George, but this grows past human endurance."

The Governor's slow, wise, wrinkle-embedded eye was upon him, the Governor's mouth opened, after the considering pause of a judge who is for turning and examining both sides of a statement before proceeding. The morning states might wait. This matter touched the character of a man of whom it was well to know the worst. He would probe it to the bottom.

"This alleged marriage took place at night ?"

"So they say, sir."

"And in a private house?"

"So it would seem, sir."

"And without a special licence?"

"There was never a licence at all, sir,—evidently; I mean there could have been none upon the admissions . . . the allegations."

"My own opinion," agreed the Governor, with a certain leaning towards his subordinate which was new to his manner.

"And this clergyman," he continued, scrutinising the lines, 'O, C, T, Oct. Baskett, M.A.' (if I have the name right); may I take it that he was no parson at all?"

"Ye may that, Sir George—I mean—" hurriedly, but too late, for the Governor was instant.

"*What* d'ye mean, sir? and *why* must I take it from your lips that a man whom ye disclaim all knowledge of is not in orders? . . . Take your time, sir, if you please," with severe courtesy.

"I mean . . ."

"No beatings about the bush. Answer me!"

"I conceive there is no such person in orders, sir."

"On what d'ye base your conception? Have ye acquaintance with every clerk in orders? Consider; 'tis not a minute since ye heard this man's name for the first time. '*Ye were told the man was a laic?*' Worse and worse! *By whom?*'" (No answer.) "And, pray, how can ye reconcile your particular and convenient knowledge of this man (whom ye never met, ye tell me) with your denials of every preceding allegation?" (No answer.) "Who is this Baskett? Speak, sir."

Boyle bit his lip in the torments of first confusion. The great man looked him over with grim disfavour. "Sirrah, I have found ye out; d'ye see? Your tongue tripped. Now, and for the last time, will ye swear to me upon the honour of a gentleman, and one of His Majesty's commissioned officers, that ye did *not* go through the form of marriage with this young woman?"

There was a pause. Boyle, at the end of his resources, inwardly shivered and plunged. "It was no marriage, sir,—and she knew it."

Furley, a mastiff leaning upon a leash, let a low, gurgling roar, and then threw back his mighty shoulders, lifting fists like knots in three-inch cable. For an instant the Quaker died within him, the beast awoke and wrought in his muscles, then manhood came to the top, but it was the manhood of an earlier experience, the prize-fighter. "Foul blow, that, bor! We claim the stakes!"

And Sue? Nature takes the deepest wound without

audible protest. There are injuries to flesh and spirit so unforeseen, so bewildering and overmastering, that it does not occur to the victim to relieve the tension of such fierce anguish with a cry.

Sue winced as she sate as if from a cruel stripe; the quivering eye, dilated nostril, and the pallor of parted lips voiced her dumb distress. Oh, the shame of it! the wicked wrong of it! What would poor dear auntie have said? What must the Governor think? and Mr. Chisholm? . . . Neither maid, wife, nor widow, and not twenty. Oh, the cruelty of it! Slowly she turned from the man whom until that moment she had believed to be her husband, nor did she look at him again; love had died hard, but was dead at last.

"No marriage? Ye are drolling, surely, Major," interposed Chisholm, curbing his voice to a softness that sounded very strange to his own ears, and would have seemed ominous to any one who knew him.

"Sirrah, will ye be pleased to hold your peace or to leave this room?" asked the Governor sternly.

The lad bowed himself back into a tense self-command. Goliath disdained to acknowledge the presence of little David by the movement of an eyelid.

It was from this moment that Chisholm dated his manhood. Not yet had that exquisite hope arisen beckoning him on; for the time he had never a thought of self, all was for her; he had hitherto been simmering with indignation, but this dastardly stab found him cool and hard as a blade come from its final bath, tempered for use. The *saeva indignatio* of his race, the cold fury of countless generations of combative Celts, burned in the eyes which shone in the wan, white face of him. Had those two been alone upon some narrow inch or skerry, as in the long-syne day of the Norse holm-gang, it was not the slender lad that would have been left to the tide and the gulls; courteous, cautious, and incredibly sudden and agile, the burly soldier would have rued his meeting with such a human wild-cat.

"Then, it comes to this, sir," the Governor was summing up. "You own to seducing an innocent child by a pretence of marriage, and to having left her upon the streets penniless——"

"I am a soldier, sir," urged Boyle, moistening dry lips and labouring excuses, "I profess mesilf no better than others, nor do I conceive mesilf to be worse; a man in a marching regiment must take his pleasures where he finds 'em. I am not the first at this game, nor am I like to be the last. I venture to appale to your Excellency as a man to a man. You have been young, you are still human; did we construe

ourselves? Such as we are, are we not as God made us?"

"I have no authority to speak for the Almighty whom ye claim as an accessory before the fact, but, for myself, sir, whom ye charge as *particeps criminis*, I simply return your words in your teeth, and ask ye, Have ye done?" The Governor was warming.

"Your pardon is begged, Sir George," pleaded Boyle in his softest and richest brogue. "Through life, 'tis me constant misfortune to be misunderstood. May I submit, with the greatest possible humility, that my fault, whatever degree of gravity your Excellency may attach to it, is not a military offence."

"Sir," replied the Governor, "ye have lied to your Commander-in-Chief with the impudence of a carted street walker! A military offence? 'Tis larceny, no less. My gorge rises at the sight of ye! . . . Of what sum did he rob ye, madam? It shall be stopped from his pay, every shilling of it, with interest."

"I will not touch his money," whispered Sue, quivering like a creature under torture.

It is to be supposed that in the course of his five-and-thirty adventurous years Boyle had fought his way out of some awkward corners. "Hit first, hit quick, hit hard, and keep hitting," was the sum of his simple philosophy, and in practice it had served him passably; action and energy being of such price in a world lying in its sloths and timidities, that most men, and many events, yield to a vigorous onset, whether well-directed and rightly sanctioned or the reverse.

But this battle was going against him. In another moment all would be lost: reputation, standing, influence, the countenance of those who reckoned. The dog's life of the marked man lay before him, of him who knows, and whose fellows know, that he is deep in his Commander's black book, of him who is never mentioned in a despatch, nor seconded for promotion, nor accorded brevet rank, nor granted leave. With this grim vista of disgrace opening before him there was yet time for a counter-stroke. Before doom was pronounced he would make a virtue of necessity, and, faith, the girl might have been a worse one. He admired her in spite of the ill-turn she had done him. Her sword-play had been better than he had reckoned upon; she had touched him here, and here again; he had been fain to break ground, and had barely saved worse by a smashing stroke below the knee. But in delivering that blow his weapon had snapped, he had wounded her, but stood before his enemy disarmed and in danger of being run through (thus the hot fancy of the swordsman figured his

plight). "Quick! ye are a lost man ilse, Con Boyle; lep in under yer inimy's guard and take her in yer ar'rms!"

"Your Excellency," he exclaimed, stooping somewhat from his full height and getting the least little tremble into his voice, for the man was no mean actor, "I am overwhelmed with confusion; I am shocked at myself. I confiss my folly, my heartluss conduct; I have treated the leedy like a damned villain; yes, like an *infernallee* damned villain! Let her beauty and me passions be my sole excuse. Look at me, sir: a man is not enjued by his Maker with the stringth of a bull and the currudge of a lion, without compinsating deficts. That's me! I have sinned; but what compinsation is poss'ble I'll make." He crossed the room and dropped upon his knee before the injured girl. "I will marry her this day. Sue, my dear, let the past be past: ye have followed me across sea and land to claim the protiction of my name."

This was the moment of Sue's greatest peril; the four men held their breaths. To the Governor and to Furley the proposal seemed a solution of the difficulty; to Chisholm, its brazen effrontery was a crowning insult. To Sue's sore heart and throbbing head it heaped confusion upon confusion. One word of his rhodomontade pricked down to memory and stung her to effective protest and resolve.

"No," she wailed, withdrawing her dress from his contact. "'Protection?' You said so before! No, never!" (Oh, but the golden voice was flat and dead; she turned from him as one might turn from an alien corpse; her face and her appeal was to the Governor.) "Sir, do not make me. I cannot. It seems fitty, for I came all the way here asking and praying for nothing better. You see I trusted him up to ten minutes ago. When he left me I excused it as his misfortune. He had been telling me overnight of married people separated by instant calls of the service. 'Twas heart-breaking, but I bore up, and God sent me friends, this good soul, Master Furley. I ne'er knew my father, but I think he was a good man, and like Master Furley. When no letter came I blamed the post, and the landlady, who put me to the door and kept my clothes. Then, when I knew from my friend (Oh, and he is a friend!) how my husband had sailed for Gibraltar, I resolved to follow. But it seems—how I cannot understand—that he had not sailed, or only by a later convoy, for we saw one another at sea, quite close; we knew one another; our eyes met and he—he was angered at seeing me. That look was cruel hard to bear, but I told myself that it was not me but my company that he disliked: all should be explained when we met.

"And we did meet, just now—in the room out there—and—and ye saw—and heard, sir." She heaved a dry sob. "He

would have beat me if we had been alone ; that I'd forgive ; he has beaten me before. (Yes, sir, ye know ye have, and I forgave ye.) But, his eyes, his face, and his wicked lies ! . . . Do not ask me, my lord, I cannot. Whilst I thought I was his wedded wife I could bear and pardon everything, but it seems I am not ; I am nothing. He owns he deceived me ; I am ruined. God, who is just and very pitiful, they say, will judge between us. Oh, it hurts so. I don't know myself. I loved ye, sir. 'Twas heart's delight to wait upon ye, to obey ye, to watch ye cross the room. 'Tis all gone now. Something is gone that used to be here"—her little hand pressed her side—"I kept it warm for him all these months, 'twas my heart's love for ye, Mr. Tighe ; when 'twas cold and feeble and seemed at point of death I nursed it back to life for ye, by repeating your name—yours ! It would turn in its sleep and moan, and by and by would wake and crow and smile in my face again—my love for ye, sir, the one, only man I ever did love, or ever shall ! 'Twas alive and moving but just now, but he has stabbed it to death with his wicked tongue and his cruel eyes. 'Tis dead, my lord, and that's the end of it—and of me, as I think. No, I'll not marry him twice—I'm no more use to him, I don't love him. . . . Let me go away. . . . I want to die ! ”

She had turned her back upon her enemy as she rose to reply, or, it might be, with the impulse of escape strong upon her, and stood leaning across the Governor's table in the very posture of appeal, her little white hands—Sue had exquisite hands, clever, dainty, and small—pressed upon the green cloth ; she looked blankly at the King's portrait upon the wall behind him as she spoke and ended with another dry sob.

The Governor drummed the table with perplexed knuckles.

“'Fore George, madam, I pity ye from my heart ; I can only approve your deceasion ; though what . . .” he ended disconnectedly with more drumming ; then brusquely to Boyle, “Ye have your answer ; ye may go,” and sucked in lips which must otherwise have said their say.

“Sir George . . . your Excellency, grant me the poor favour of one small last word.”

“At your own risk, for the more ye say the deeper ye sink. Be short now.”

“Hear me out, if it please ye, Sir George, before ye condemn me ; 'tis my own future that I am now considering, as an unworthy servant of His Majesty, and am bound to consider.”

“Cut it short, sir,” said the Governor, drumming.

“I will, sir. I call yourself to witness that my attempt at reparation has been repulsed. I regret ut. 'Twas

honestly mint. In the course of a soldier's life I have on various occasions been hurried by my temper into regrettable actions (as who has not that is worth the name of a man ?), but I have always—always, I repeat—offered suitable satisfaction to the offended party—to a man my sword, to a woman my hand in marriage.”

The Governor's short, harsh laugh, like the bark of a big dog, interrupted the speaker. “Huh! ye did, did ye? Ma conscience, sir! I hold that the five (or is it six?) gentlemen whose blood is upon your hands have the least to curse ye for. *What have ye done with your wives?* Now, go, in the devil's name, whose most certainly ye are. And, hark ye, I wish never to see your face again save upon parade. Commend me to your Colonel, and request him, in my name, to send me his morning states by whom he will so that it be not by yourself!”

Boyle drew himself up and saluted grandly; he had regained composure and would act his part to the fall of the curtain, an honest man cruelly condemned for a trivial fault. He passed the door and ran the gauntlet of a watchful ante-room with a face of rock, all hell at work behind a mask. Hours later, when the first rage of the stripes sustained by his pride was lessening, and a congested brain was cooling and growing capable of rational thought, he picked up a London news-sheet brought by the fast Falmouth Packet, which had outsailed the convoy, and glanced down the paragraphs of personal news. The word Hollinghurst caught his eye. He read:

“The Will of the late Colonel Erasmus Hollinghurst of H.M. 12th Reg., who died and was buried at Gibraltar last Year, has been proved under Ten Thousand Pounds Personalty. The whole is devised without Trust and absolutely to the young and beautiful Widow of the late gallant Officer, who was in England at the time of his Death, on the sole Condition that she do spend an Hour beside his Grave within a Twelvemonth of his Decease. It is understood that Mrs. H., in dutiful compliance with the last Wish of her gallant Husband, sailed for Gibraltar by H.M.S. *Paladin* with the Falmouth Convoy this Month.”

“Tondher and turf!” gasped Boyle, and sprang to his feet, cursing his luck and wasted opportunities. At length he paused in his pacing of his room and addressed his own reflection in the glass.

“Con, ye gommeral, remimber yer manners! Sthop

blasphemin' now, and be kapin' to the point. Ye will not be skippin' across the neutral ground to the Spaniards: the grub 'd poison ye, let alone the vermin. Nor to the Frinch. Ye will reserve yer fire. 'Tis one woman has bin the spoil of yez, 'tis another must mend ye. Yuss, a good match will set ye to rights, and the widow is the woman for the business. But ye must be quick upon the mark, for this morning's work will be on its travels. . . . Be the powers, I'll do myself the honour of calling upon the leedy this day."

Students of what may be called the pathology of the human soul are agreed that there is a point beyond which a man's better impulses cease to respond to the divine call. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" is a disputable text, a dictum to divide and discept; but in practice how goes it? Throw over, if you will, the terminology and mechanism of the theologian, it comes to the same thing in the end; the deliberately determined sinner reaches in his day's saunterings the last fork of the downward track and bears to the left: beyond this, say the saints, his angel, the white Presence who has attended him mournfully since childhood, refuses to follow; certes, he goes on more swiftly and lightly, and is never more troubled with momentary misgivings. It is to be supposed that this was the final crisis with Major Cornelius Boyle.

CHAPTER III

THE FINDING OF SUSAN

THE ten majors watched their unpopular comrade leave. Comment was needless, the man's face bewrayed him.

A little later the door opened, the lady appeared, closely veiled, her hand within the arm of the burly sea captain. The young civilian with a touch of the military set-up followed closely with a troubled face. The party passed the sentries pursued by ten pairs of curious eyes and much mute speculation, and the deferred business of the day began. But there was one man among them, our friend Wade Justin, who was upon thorns to be through with it and to follow that singularly associated trio and put his suspicions to the proof.

After all, if this were indeed his ward, Miss Susan Agatha Travis, or Mrs. Boyle (any third alternative he scouted), had not her brother the first claim to her recognition? Who was he, Justin, but a nameless stranger to her?

But where was Travis? He missed him at his quarters, heard news of him at the South Port, and again, and later, at the Ragged Staff, and ran into him at the Mole Head paying off a Catalan boatman. (The youngster had been laying gunnery marks for his battery.)

"Keep your man, Travis," cried Justin a little breathlessly, for he had walked fast in the heat. "Oh, I am well, never better, I thank ye!—And yourself, my lad? No news?"

"None, sir. No women came by the convoy save those upon the strengths. Oh, I don't reckon the *Paladin's*. There was talk of a beer-ship, but I can make nothing of it, nor get her name. She is not in harbour, anyway."

"A brig, or snow, was taken by the Riff-men in the fog, did ye hear?"

"Oh, that cock-and-bull story of the *Snorter's* First luff? He was drunk, or dreaming. I'm not going to let myself believe *that*. You *couldn't*, Major. Why, he says he saw——"

"I know—I know—a woman among them—but——"

"Your pardons, señors, but is it the brig *Marie* that you

seek? She wass take, but haf make escape. She brought up las' night. She lie—so——" The Catalan boatman was speaking: he raised a brown hand and pointed to the *Mary of Yarmouth*.

It further appeared that a boat-party had gone aboard her not two hours since. "Her capitan, a younger señor and a señorita, a miladi—why, yaas."

"Set us on board her, my lad. Travis, this grows warm," he passed a handkerchief across a steaming brow. "Nay, boy, I can't tell ye what I mean,—I daren't tell—I *won't* tell! Wait and see."

The young Scot had followed the lady down to the boat, going as in a dream, or as a man goes in liquor. He did not return the salute of the sentry, who detected an officer in mufti, and muttered to himself as he went, "What haf I seen? *Did* I see it? There wass neffer a Chisholm of Kinloch Shin that wass *taisch* yet. It comes from the mother's side, the Mackenzies, gin it cam' at a'. But, for sure, I saw the muckle reid man ben the hoose there with a whitish thing aneath his neb, as though he wass new-lathered by the barber. And when I luiked again it wass awa'! An' then I luiked and saw his mou' wide and fu' o' sawdust (wass it?). I dinna ken juist what it wass, but it wasna the parritch; and again it wass awa'. And then I saw masel' at a tow's end, whilk same is a sair unchancey thing to hae seen, gin indeed 'twas masel', as I misdoot it wass. *Wass it ma weird?* Aweel," throwing his shoulders back, "we are a' of us in the hands o' the guid God, and ma faither's son wull juist be daein' his duty, fa' what may."

The boy accompanied the two on board, which was questionable; he should by rights have reported himself first, but what would you? He was deep in love, over head and ears in it, and was beset by conflicting duties and irreconcilable claims. Thus, King George came first, no doubt, but His Majesty maun bide a wee, for was there not a rascal to be called to account, the lady's betrayer? Yet, how? An ensign cannot send a friend to a major; nor could he make a song about the cause of his quarrel with the man; the lady's name must be protected. Therefore this, too, must lie over. And the third and infinitely the most difficult duty was towards the lady herself. This morning's catastrophe had upset her plans. What would be her alternative? That she was an orphan he already knew, and that scene in the Park, fresh in his memory (and in hers), had shown him the depth of her destitution. Nobody, so far as he knew, awaited her in England. No, here she was, thrown adrift on a pitiless

world, penniless, as he supposed, friendless, and without a legal right even to the name she bore. It must not be. 'Tis too soon (he was saying to himself), yet, it must be now or never, for this brig would be discharging cargo, and making for some other port. Mistress Susan, a lady, a girl of birth and breeding, must not be beholden like a waif, a stowaway, to a tarry-breeks ship's skipper for bed and biscuit for the rest of her life. 'Twas unthinkable.

So he would take his chance of rebuke for delayed compliance with orders to rejoin, would risk everything to serve her. He would see her back upon shipboard (her only home, think of it !), and before night make his adieux, speak out what was in his heart, or remain mute, as God should will and the occasion prompt.

He helped her up the side ; she climbed less lightly than her wont—the heart was like lead within her that day, and yet, it seemed to the lad, that stilly as she sate, and dowie as she moved, his lady was aware of his presence and would rather that he were there than away.

Furley, penitent over his explosion, and trying in vain to recall what " language " his heat had betrayed him into using, maintained a ponderous silence on board the boat, and upon reaching the *Mary* went below, leaving the poop to the two youngsters. They paced it side by side as their sea-custom had taught them ; he too keenly conscious of his fast-passing privileges to hasten matters, to say the word which must make or break him ; she contemplating a ruined scheme of things, picking up and laying down, sorting and piecing fragments of broken purposes. So neither spoke, although they had trodden the short planking between the break and the tiller twenty times.

Then Sue turned from him as they turned, and, gazing bitterly at the Rock, as upon the countenance of a false friend from whom much had been expected but who had failed her utterly, sighed and dropped her eyes upon the small white fingers laid athwart the port rail. Her wedding-ring ! Its soft yellow gleam had now a new and sinister association. With a hard sob she wrenched it from her finger, and with a moan of anguish raised her hand and flung it overside. It struck the port brace of the main-yard and rebounded tinkling upon the deck behind her. Chisholm stooped and recovered it : he remained kneeling, pressing it reverently to his lips.

The girl saw him through springing tears, and turned upon him with a sort of imperious tenderness.

" No, sir, give it to me. 'Tis not yours."

" Mine till deith, madam—till deith. Yes, Susan, for I maun name ye that the noo."

She stood, catching her breath, a new light (of wonder, was it?) in troubled eyes still swimming in tears. "Oh no, sir; no, sir. Ye don't know what ye say. But it is good of ye to pity me. Your kindness, yes, from the first, has gone to the heart of me. I shall never meet, I have never met. But—I took ye for a friend, sir; let be my hand, if ye please—just for a friend, like our good Master. Ah, do not spoil it all."

"And can I no' be aye yer frien', Susan? What mair think ye I'm speiring? (Oh, Mr. Chisholm, Mr. Chisholm!) Why else am I come aboard wi' ye? Ye canna pass the lave o' yer life in a ship's wame——" He controlled himself, relinquished the ring, rose, and awaited his lady's pleasure, wise in time. This was not his moment, and the lad had the wit to see as much and to wait.

For the woman was in the nadir of reaction. She had made her forced march, offered battle, fought and—lost.

Gray-haired generals in like case have been known to give way to the passion of tears. Young Frederick (not then "The Great") in similar circumstances lost his head, galloped from the field that was by no means so lost as he feared, and was found later by his victorious subordinates miles to the rear in the depths of depression. Conceive the heart-breaking collapse of the architect whose cathedral nave has fallen in; of painter, or poet, or playwright whose consummate effort has been damned; of the young counsel whose first and crucial case is nonsuited on account of an initial oversight of his own. Bitter are the feelings of these, and for an hour or so they will find themselves calling upon the rocks to cover them from the pitying eyes of the successful. Yet are their cases retrievable. But not so hers whose feet have been betrayed into that blind alley of the affections—a marriage which is no marriage.

She was inwardly rebelling against her fate. She stopped and looked at the man beside her, finding her heart quiet and dead within her and all the wheels of life run down.

No, this was not time to plead his cause, to confess his love, and claim the right to stand between the girl and the world. And as he straightened his face a shoreboat ran alongside and a man of his own age, a man in uniform, came over the side, reached the poop and approached, bowing.

"I beg your pardon, sir, may I ask if——"

But Susan, whose face had been averted, turned sharply. "*Dray!*" she cried, and brother and sister rushed into one another's arms.

CHAPTER IV

THE END OF THE QUEST. THE MAJOR AS GUARDIAN, AND THE ENTANGLING OF FRESH THREADS

“So it all came right in the end,” or rather, as this was not the end, the bark of Susan’s fortune had achieved a provisional and incomplete equilibrium, satisfactory only so far as it went, in that she had regained her brother, had found, or been found by, a guardian not more faithful indeed, or more devoted than her rugged old seafarer, but better suited to her condition, and with resources more adequate to her comfort and welfare than a stuffy locker-bunk upon a trading brig.

The little cabin of the *Mary of Yarmouth* was the scene of solemn conclaves, discussions of plans, and productions of documents. Susan could vouch for her brother, her brother in turn vouched for Justin, whom Furley presently recognised as his staunchest seconder in the sea-fight in the Mozambique Channel. Into their hands the great-hearted mariner sorrowfully surrendered his delightful shipmate, and after a tender leave-taking, piteous in its dumb pathos, sailed away for Port Mahon, Minorca, to the garrison of which (then) British possession he had cargo to deliver.

A lodging on shore was procured for Susan. Her guardian, adequate as usual, placing her in the house and charge of the same lady to whom he had recommended Mrs. Hollinghurst. This was one result of holding unexceptionable testimonials, and of having won the confidence of those influential ladies on board the *Paladin*. Mrs. Trigge’s sympathies were enlisted; she promised to call: a point scored.

“And really, Mrs. Lamb,” said our friend, addressing the lady of the little old Spanish house in Prince Frederic Street, which was to be the home of his ward, to whose private ear he judged it best to confide the story of her innocent misfortunes, “I hardly know how you are to address the poor

child. Mrs. Boyle she is not ; Mrs. Tighe she was made by what she and her witness believed at the time to be a legal marriage, but which the other party to it repudiates. 'Tis painful to revert to her maiden name, but I fear it must be done. Call her plain Susan as much as ye can, eh ? Ye will allow me to look in upon her sometimes, I trust ?—if Mrs. Hollinghurst will not object ? ”

The widow protested that she would always be more than delighted to see Major Justin, and was apparently speaking the truth. Mrs. Lamb, who had learned that the little man stood high in the Governor's good graces and was a person of mark and experience, was equally gracious.

“ I told 'em nothing about the child's means, Travis. Ye see with me that whilst this unfortunate marriage hangs in the wind, the less we say about them the better. Your sister will be amply provided for, but need know nothing at present. To advertise her fortune might bring that fellow Boyle upon the scene again, or, if not him, another. By the by, what sort is that young Scot whom we found with her, comforting her, or so it looked ? ”

“ Chisholm is an uncommon good sort, sir. My sister says so ; but ye will be thinking poor little Sue is not much of a judge. Still, the fellow behaved well to her on board, and before he sailed. That guinea in the Park was a godsend ; it may even have saved her very life. Who knows ? Mr. Furley, who seems shrewd, spoke heartily of the man. I am growing intimate with him ; he has a warm corner in his heart for Susan, I fancy, but has said nothing to her or to me. He is poor, a quiet-living man, a linguist, and a keen soldier. Would ye permit me to introduce him to ye ? ”

“ Certainly, as soon as ye like. Chisholm, d'ye call him ? I knew a man of the name in India—I wonder ? If so, we have common ground.”

Meanwhile how went things with Boyle ? We took leave of him in act of deciding to lay siege to the moneyed widow with whose affections he had thoughtlessly trifled on the voyage, but whom he now recognised as well worth winning. The adventurer's instinct had for once been at fault. He would repair his misused opportunities by prompt and assiduous court.

But by sheer chance the man's first two calls at the little house in Prince Frederic Street were unsuccessful : upon each occasion Mrs. Hollinghurst happened to be walking or engaged.

At his third attempt he encountered Mrs. Trigge at the doorstep, and passed on without betraying any interest in the house—a lucky escape, as he judged.

Upon his fourth coming the door was opened to him by—Susan.

Husband and wife stood for a moment face to face, he in the street, she within the entry, hasp in hand. The almost limitless effrontery of the Irishman was for once at fault; for the life of him he could invent no excuse for his appearance. To give to the wronged woman before him the name of the other, the widow, presumably her friend and house-mate, as the object of his call, would be ruinous to his suit. His rocky face flushed with a sudden heat of curbed vexation, chagrin, apprehension. Was his life to be perpetually crossed by this chit of a girl? How came she there? How much had she told of her history, and of his? He stood like an oaf, irresolute, reduced to a shamed silence, perused at their sad leisure by those grave, loveless eyes, which passed over him, wondering how they could ever have been interested in him.

This was the burial of love.

The man was by far the more painfully embarrassed of the two. It was as though some bird's-nesting boy, having climbed to the hole of a stockdove, should find under his hand, not the eggs which he sought, but the white, dry skeleton of last year's mother-bird.

"Who is it? Did I hear a knock? Are you there, Susan?" It was the voice of Mrs. Hollinghurst from within, and Susan replied without emotion, "Just a person who has come to the wrong house, dear."

The door closed upon him. He turned in haste. Thenceforth he felt that the little Spanish house was locked and barred against him. His suit must be prosecuted in the public gardens, where the lady and her hostess, Mrs. Lamb, might be expected to take the air of evenings.

But if Susan should accompany them? He could only hope that Susan would not, and, as it turned out, she did not. It was the discarded wife that proved his best ally in the adventurer's last attempt to rehabilitate his fortunes at the expense of a woman's heart.

Her house-mates had gone through Sue's wardrobe, admiring its abundance and the solid excellence of its material. In all that the natural woman needs, the outfit provided by good old Hippisley and designed by his Jemima, was perfect in its way. But it was the way of the Quakers. Such of it as was intended to take the eye was amazing to the ladies, who cried out upon it, exclaiming that no gentlewoman, that no person, indeed, above the degree of a serving-maid could possibly be seen in those frocks. Whoever saw such skimpy widths, and such cutting! For what manner of women were such things intended? Skirts? These were no skirts at all,

but petticoats worn outside. So straight, so shapeless, and such utter absence of lace, of flounces, of buttons, bugles, and beads—*of mode*.

“Child, these will never do. For a lane, now, or for a buttercup meadow, perhaps—though in what part of what country they would pass the Lord only knows! It must be where there are no men (or women).” More notes of exclamation, more adjectives, finally the one word too many, and the gentle patience of the owner of the treasures thus derided was exhausted.

“Mrs. Lamb, dear, and you too, Julia dear, I do just want you to understand that these things were given me—*given*, mind, when I had but what I stood in, by the kindest and sweetest friends I ever had in all my life. You don’t mean it, I know, but you hurt me. I wore frocks like these for months in London—think! And I will wear just these and no others. Oh, I know very well, ma’am, that I cannot go upon the street with you in them; but I can go alone, or with my brother. ‘The men will not look at me?’ Indeed, I do not want the men to be looking at me.” And, fearing to say all that she felt, Sue left the room.

The others smiled upon one another, amused and abashed.

“And, really, my dear, ’tis no use saying that the men will not look at her; ’twould be wiser to tell her that with those things on her back she will be mobbed in the Alameda. Though ’tis mere truth that with such a face and such a figure the poor girl may wear what she will and yet be admired. All the same, it would be monstrous inconvenient for you to be seen with her, for your styles would not suit in the least.

“Just a little more in the light, if ye please. So—we must have the thing hang straight, mustn’t we? Those bones will need care, my dear, and occasional adjustment. But patience does it. Oh, ye will get them all staring, never fear, and set the mode, if I know anything about it. But ye must not, and cannot, appear with poor Susan in those frocks.”

Indeed no. A woman making her *début* in a new society cannot be too careful as to whom she stands with upon her first appearance. Our Susan was sweet by nature, gentle in mind and manners, delightful and considerate as a house-mate; biddable, in a word; but the inadequacy, or rather the singularity of her attire unfitted her for the public companionship of ladies aspiring to be thought fashionable. Susan, in the simplicity of her Quaker frocks (and the freshness of her beauty), would have been too striking a foil to the maturer charms and more daring costumes of Mrs. Hollinghurst.

And what, think you, was this new and surprising creation,

the very latest Paris fashion of the spring of 1779, which the charming widow was preparing to introduce to the ladies of the garrison ?

Attend ye, my gentle readers ; lithe and listen, ye ladies, and prepare to be astonished. Clear your imagination of farthingale, hoop, and pannier, for the structure which I essay to describe was a thing by itself, a vagary, an eccentricity, the comet of a season, that flashed parabolically and passed, and has (mercifully) never reappeared. From a stout waist-band two strong whalebone rods, one upon either hand, curved outward and downward, reaching to within an inch of the ground some two-and-a-half feet to right and left of the wearer's ankles. This pair of antennæ supported and extended a breadth of silken petticoat, which was a matter of five feet from side to side, but merely nine inches or so from back to front. Thus the skirt, but what of the body ? This was a modification of the male cutaway, open, of course, to reveal a low-cut bodice, faced with bright silk and tailed amazingly, for two slender, whip-like extensions, lined with silk *en suite*, and in strong contrast to the petticoat, hung down behind to the very hem of the skirt, rippling and twisting in the wind as the wearer walked or drove lightly before a following breeze, even as some gallant sloop runs free with her mainsail square to port and her spinnaker boomed out to starboard, her split pennant accompanying her movement with a vivid and graceful life of its own.

Whether this mode—the invention of young Queen Marie Antoinette's favourite *modiste*—would prove convenient or permanent (it was neither) had nothing to do with the pleasurable anticipations cherished by Mesdames Lamb and Hollinghurst. It was new, and they alone of their sex as represented upon Gibraltar possessed the patterns. Did their rivals admire or decry mattered not a jot, at least they should see and should wonder.

This, then, was the secret which was engrossing the waking thoughts and the nimble fingers of dear, frivolous, little Julia Hollinghurst, a kindly, unoccupied creature, well-meaning and harmless, but at present untouched by any nobler issue.

The day arrived when the work was finished, thanks to Susan's deft co-operation ; for the girl had no scruples against decking her friend in any fineries she was willing to wear. The result was astonishing, even when exhibited within the narrow limits of the Prince Frederic Street sitting-room. Have you ever watched some fine, strong-winged butterfly, a Swallowtail, say, or Painted Lady, alight upon a sun-warmed bench to strut sedately, carrying its exquisitely enamelled vanes at nicely adjusted angles, tacitly aware of its loveliness,

as one must imagine, and in excellent conceit of its beautifully appressed self and the warm world about it? Thus did Mrs. Hollinghurst poise, and turn, and gravely pirouette before her mirror, whilst her friends laughed and clapped soft little palms in delight at the result of their joint efforts.

Later, when the heat of the day was over and the sea-wind had cooled south-fronting walls, Mrs. Lamb would have her guest off to the public promenade for her first introduction to garrison society, a demure, slow-pacing, reticent, rustling wonder, regarded by all.

Meanwhile, Susan, no gorgeous *vanessa* nor gold-dusted *papilio*, but, rather, one of your bright-eyed, delicately shaded Mountain Ringlets, her hand within her brother's arm, was pacing a little-frequented path high above the town. The weather was perfect, the outlook noble beyond power of description, for the view from the Rock is one of the great land- and sea-scapes of the world. Below them lay the Bay, dotted with English shipping; at their feet was the long, white line of the new curtain wall. There, to the south across the Strait, arose the lofty crest of Apes Hill; those white specks across the water to westward were the houses of Algeçiras, soon to be the base of operations for the siege just beginning. Northward the low heathery ridges ran down to the sands of the isthmus, where, unknown to young Travis, the local Migueletes had that day been replaced by Spanish regulars. The game was begun.

Brother and sister had as yet seen but little of one another save in company, and had much to hear and to tell. Their tongues went gaily. The delight of being once more together engrossed them: the ever-fresh surprise of it; the breath-arresting wonder of it! Their youthful lives, that had kept step since their childhood, had recently, and without warning, been wrenched apart, and driven into waste places for a while: and now, again without warning, and without concurrence of theirs, to find themselves reunited once more was a bliss too keen for analysis; it must just be enjoyed as it came.

Hence it had naturally come about that whilst each had told the other his or her story of adventure, the tales had been told disconnectedly, and without method. Each, too, whilst guiltless of intentional concealment, had slipped lightly over the dark days which were done with, trouble and disgrace, to dwell with delight upon brighter and more pleasing incidents. Travis could have drawn a plan of the house in Catherine Court, and felt that he would have recognised Hippiisley and Jasper had he met them upon the street, whilst Sue had heard at least half a dozen times of what had passed in Lord Duddingstone's cabinet and Mother Lea's cottage. Of just

what had occurred upon Sandylane Hill she did not know, nor, in truth, was Travis himself oversure of the incidents. Nor had she told him more than the bare outline of her marriage. That the man now serving as Major Boyle in Hardenberg's Hanoverians, but then passing as Tighe, had gone through a ceremony of marriage with his sister was known to Travis (and bitterly, if silently resented, we may be sure). Justin had had it over with Furley, and had learned from him, and from the girl, that Boyle now repudiated the ceremony. So much Travis knew, and more, that every attempt upon the part of Hippisley, and his ally, the rector, had failed to identify the officiating parson or to establish the fact that such a man was in orders. He had heard Justin allude to the "lines" as a wholly informal document, drawn up after the ceremony was over and the principals had left, and unsigned by either; and with a young man's impatience of failure had never asked to see the paper, nor, as it happened, had the name of the pseudo-cleric been mentioned in his presence. Why should it have been? Competent persons upon the spot had exhausted the possibilities in that direction. Nor, for his sister's sake, was he over-anxious that the fact of the marriage should be established. The more he heard of Boyle the less he relished him as a possible husband for his sister. They were better apart: and in this her legal guardian concurred.

So, on cool evenings when off duty he would walk and chat with her in the unfrequented mountain paths of the great peninsular fortress, hearing her little tongue run happily. Whatever his trouble or his triumph he kept it to himself. This was his sister's hour, her holiday.

That evening the girl was brimful of the joy of life; the wonderful fabric was finished, thanks largely to herself; all three had worked double tides upon its details in the hot little house, but the ultimate stitch had been set at last, and the two chiefly concerned had sailed forth triumphantly for an evening of conquests, leaving Sue to enjoy a quiet stroll with her brother. A stroll? The girl was in the mood for a ramble, a clamber. Her system had accommodated itself to the shore life again, her ears had ceased to listen for the thump and gurgle of water beneath the counter, and the land no longer heaved beneath her feet. The insistent grip of her personal trouble was relaxing, she was splendidly well and in need of exercise: her spirits rose and would hardly let her keep the rational pace her companion set, she would have run!

"Dray, what an old sobersides you are to-night! Cheer up! What is the matter with you? And why are you come so late?"

"Perhaps because I have come all the way from Europa Point. We are making a battery of heavy metal down there. In some winds the current brings ships close in. Matter? Is anything the matter?" he laughed quietly, easily, thinking of something which had delayed him a few minutes from his tryst, something which he could not discuss with her; a folded paper which was at this moment within his breast, a cartel, which, however, was no longer a cartel; a pistol, one might compare it to, which in the act of discharge had blown out its breech, and wounded its owner, and had been left in the hands of the man at whom it had been pointed.

"And oh, Dray, I got such a start yesterday! I met a man in the street, a soldier, who looked hard at me for a moment ('twas that which made me look at him), and oh, would you believe it, he was exactly like the clergyman who married me? No, it was not fancy—I don't mean to say it was the man, because it couldn't be, this was only a common soldier and *he* was the curate of the parish, you see (we never could find him again, but, by the way he read the service, any one could tell what he was). But this man yesterday had the same long nose, and the same little chin, and white hair. (*He* had a wig, you know, that night.) Now, wasn't it strange? And he looked as if he knew me for a moment."

"Oh, Goosey! what imaginations girls must have: a long nose and a short chin and a white head, and you have a parson at once! Why, up to last night there must have been hundreds of such in garrison; to-day not one, and why? The Governor has forbid hair-powder by order. So good-bye to Sukey's rascally curate!"

They stopped and approached the edge of the track they were following, a narrow gradient with a low parapet overgrown with prickly pear (below Pocoroco it runs, and just above the old artillery magazines), and gazed in silence over the water of the anchorage, over which a momentary catspaw was playing, turning the glossy surface to the hues of a dove's neck. They had thought themselves entirely alone, remote and free, but, as they stood thus mutely enjoying the beauty of the evening, a voice just below them broke out into song:

"And, sooth to say, no belted knight
Who wore on heel a spur,
Could keep his seat, nor stand upright
Save Sir John Gardiner.
Ne'er shall we see his match again,
None like him now there be,
Who drank to death two aldermen
And Oxford tailors three."

This mock-heroic, bacchanalian ballad should have been sung to a tableful of jolly fellows in festive guise, and to a saucy air, and seemed ludicrously out of place and ill-rendered when droned to a lugubrious chant ending with a melancholy snuffle.

"H'st! What's this?" whispered Travis, lifting a finger and craning over the needled greenness of the parapet. "That is a song they would sing at wines in the House; there must be one of us down there, and I fancy I have heard that voice somewhere."

That an Oxonian, a Christ Church man too, should have had to take the shilling moved the lad's heart to pity: he manœuvred to obtain a peep at the singer. There, just beneath them, in a recess of the rock, was a small magazine, guarded by a single sentry; the man, seen from directly above him, was all hat and shoulder-straps, but by following the path they would come upon him at close quarters.

As they turned the angle the lonely man, drooping despondently over his musket in some homesick reverie, jumped alertly to attention at the apparition of an officer, and presented his arm. The ensign saluted, failed to recognise, and was passing, when he was conscious of a change in his sister's step and an added pressure of her hand within his arm, and, following her glance, saw close beside him, emerging as from a mist, the unforgotten features of Tavy Baskett. He checked, arresting the half-completed salute; the old school-fellows faced one another; the Ensign's brows and mouth a-work with mixed emotions—perplexity, pity, wonder, and the sudden inrush of half-realised and unwelcome possibilities. The long nose, pursed-up mouth, and runaway chin of his ancient tyrant were drawn and sharpened by fear of recognition: the heavy musket which, in accord with military regulation, he still retained at the present, shook in his hands. The Ensign bade the man stand at ease and drew a slow breath, considering the position.

Here was a mighty inconvenient proximity. Granted the facts of a royal pardon and commission, still it is not to a man's advantage whilst holding the latter to be known to have been in a position to need the former. If this were the case of the officer, that of the private was worse; for, as Travis remembered, a warrant had been issued for this fellow's apprehension; and to judge from his haggard countenance, the wretch had enlisted to evade it, and still went in fear of arrest.

"Tavy! How came ye here?" said Travis at length, with compassion in his voice, and too occupied with his discovery to observe his sister's agitation. The sentry's

lips remained closed, his eyes blinked and shifted, the poor fellow was trusting to silence for protection as defenceless woodland creatures feign death in their emergencies. But it was not the anger of the handsome young officer, once his fag, that he feared to draw down upon himself by speech. Travis spoke again.

"But we heard ye were drowned. I saw it in the *News*. Lord Duddingstone spoke of it with real concern. How in the world came ye to this pass? Did ye not know that all the things were restored?" Still no answer. "Man, I bear ye no malice," cried Travis, with just a touch of hauteur. "What ye did by the roadside I make sure ye were mighty unwilling to do; nor do I know just what ye did, nor what befell me. As it came about ye were upon my side after all, whatever ye thought at the time, for here I stand, a sound man, as ye see. It pleased God to spare my life and His Majesty to grant me a pardon. I could have stood your friend in England had I but known where ye lay; and might stand your friend here."

And still there was no answer. The man might be at ease in a military sense, but assuredly in no other: his duty chained him to his post, or he would have run. Twice whilst Travis was speaking he made an involuntary effort to salute, and would, if he could, have hidden his face. As for expression, the countenance bore none beyond the pitifully made-up face common to old soldiers of indifferent character, and to long-term convicts; there was the pinching together and hardening of all the features, the deprecatory grin mingling with the modified and humble scowl, the corded jaw and creased, unsteady eye. Behind such a mask as this your jail-bird and hard bargain alike are wont to endure with thumping heart the brow-beatings and scarifying personalities of the fiend in authority.

Travis, although young to the service, knew that expression, and could guess of what experiences it was the outcome, and against what grisly possibilities this dumb mask was the last poor defence. He could see that the man was afraid; and supposing himself to be the object of his fears, it vexed him to feel this and to find his good intentions distrusted. After a moment's pause he drew from his pocket a couple of dollars and a bladder-pouch of tobacco. "Ah, well, Tavy, I am not upon duty, and know not whether I do right in addressing a sentry. At least I'll not presume upon my rank; 'tis far from my wish to force my acquaintance upon any; nor to make a man speak who prefers silence. But at least ye shall not escape some little token of my—what shall I say?—goodwill. Take these from me, and when ye want me,

remember I am in garrison and would like, if I might, to serve ye, for old times' sake."

At the sight of the gifts the man's eyes blinked fast, filled and ran over; his mouth relaxed; he must have been very poor, and a stranger to the small indulgences prized by the common soldier. With the water trickling down his cheeks he involuntarily broke silence, as it seemed, with hoarsely muttered thanks.

"Heaven bless you, Travis!—sir, I mean—" blubbered the poor creature, knuckling away his tears. "I c-can't help it, 'tis the first k-kind w-word s-since—since my f-fall."

Do a kindness, pardon an injury, and upon the instant one's deed, however hard it seemed in the doing, and however golden in its quality, dwindles to a humiliating insignificance. For a moment one has partaken of the nature of God, and has been, as a consequence, privileged to see oneself as He sees, and one's holiest acts weighed in His balance. Compared to His vast enterprises, His illimitable beneficence, how microscopical, how meagre is one's best!

Young Travis was undergoing this humbling but salutary experience. His old persecutor's gratitude shamed him, he shrank from it, and from being the witness of a grown man's tears. He moved on, too engrossed in memories aroused by this unlooked-for reappearance to be sensible of the increasing drag upon his arm and the silence of his sister.

"Unlucky devil! he has come to the ground between two stools—the very ground. Sue, ye saw that poor wretch? I was his fag at Shrewsbury, and he ill-used me; I forgive him all that; but when I was at my lowest, and upon the road, I met him again and engaged him to help me in the last piece of wickedness that I planned. 'Twas to take the purse of a big Irishman (I have clean forgot the fellow's name) by the roadside south of a place called Malby Cross. There was a hill, as I remember, which he and this one were to alight and walk up, letting the coach get on ahead. I was to waylay them, and this poor tool was to assist me. He must have sold the thing, for I was shot and left upon the road, where, later in the day, Justin found me, and ye know the rest."

Both the girl's hands were now upon his arm: she had half-turned, and was stammering with agitation. "Malby Cross, ye said? and an Irishman? Was not his name *Tighe*, Dray? And oh, when did this happen?—the date, Dray? Was it not the twelfth of December?"

"*Tighe*? Yes, now I think of it, *Tighe* was his name, an officer lately in trouble at Chester. As for the date I am hazy, for I lost count, but you are almost to the day. But, *Tighe*?—It was not your——?"

"But it was ; it was indeed ! Oh, Dray, think of it, I was walking beside that coach as it went forward ! How near we must have been ! (How close ! and not to know !) And that soldierman back there, I thought I remembered his face. It was he, then, who rode inside with us from near Chester. (After the meeting with you he rode outside for some reason, I can guess for what reason, now !)" She sighed, recalling the Major's efforts at love-making during that journey, constantly baulked by the getting in of fresh passengers, but successful enough in the end. "Yes ; that is the man, for sure, but when I was watching him just now I was puzzled in my mind. He is wearing his hair unpowdered this evening, and like that he reminded me of the melancholy young man who rode inside with us, as I told ye, but when I met him in the street with his hair in powder (oh, 'twas he to a certainty, for he knew me), then, I say, he reminded me of the curate who married me."

"Was he the curate ? Ye could never find the man again, ye know ? "

"What is this person's name ?—not *Baskett* ? Mercy, but that was the clergyman's very name, Dray ! 'tis on my lines ; and this must be the man. And oh dear ! and oh dear ! —God pity me, for I'm not married after all—a common soldier ! " Sue bent her face and wept.

"But, oh dear ! and oh dear ! and ye *are* married ! " cried Travis, "for this fellow was a parson at the time, and is one still for ought that I know, for they didn't unfrock him : he was given out to have drowned himself, and was never actually convicted of anything. 'Twas a rogue's trick he served ye, my dear, and I'll—— Come back with me, Sukey, and we'll have this out with his reverence. Goodness, but this half explains it. I could not conceive what there was about me to throw him into such a taking ; perhaps it was *you* whom he feared ; but, again, why ? "

If the man had shown trepidation at their first interview, the prospect of a second almost threw him into panic. The quid which he was in act of rolling slipped from his fingers, he shifted his feet and twittered with terror as the brother and sister stopped before him. Travis spoke at once and sternly.

"Tavy, what is this that I've just heard ? Look at this lady." But the ex-clergyman was already upon his knees deprecating the just wrath of the brother in tearful agonies of entreaty.

"None of this ! Get up ! '*Shun* ! " cried Travis.

Great is discipline. At the impulse of the all-compelling word soldierly habit lifted, the groveller to his feet and fixed him in the rigid posture of military attention, although his

throat worked spasmodically within its stock and tears still trickled.

But for once Sue was moved to indignation. "Oh, man, how could ye? What harm did I ever do to ye that ye should serve me so?"

The sight of his sister's distress hardened Travis's mouth. The cause of her sorrow showed that he was aware of the change of expression by that quivering contraction of flesh that anticipates a blow. Travis saw and relented.

"Tavy, I have already forgiven ye, on my own account, but this is news to me as being your handiwork, and I'll own it touches me closely. What have ye to say to it?"

"Mr. Travis, I will tell you everything. 'Tis all of the same piece. You think I gave you away to the Major on the road, but, indeed, and upon my very soul I did not. He overheard our talk in the bowling-alley, every word of it, from behind that yew hedge. He has bragged to me of it."

"Soho, if not then, you own yourself in his confidence since."

"In his power, sir, for his eavesdropping had shown him the danger I stood in, as well as your plans. With the belt which he manœuvred to take—and did take from your body—he thought to make his own terms with my lord, but it seemed that you had divided the gems, the best were missing, and my lord impounded those the Major brought, and threatened him with the law unless he produced the rest. I thought he would have killed me that night. It seemed as if nothing but my last breath would convince him that I was not hiding the things, which were no more his than mine," added the speaker with bitterness. "Oh, ye don't know the man, sir: he would betray any one, desert any one, rob any one to further his ends."

"He betrayed, he robbed, and he deserted me, sir, thanks to yourself," said Sue, "for I suppose ye were never the curate of the parish?"

"Ah, madam, I had forgot for a moment that ye knew him; you at least will understand. The Fathers held that the devil sometimes was permitted to walk in human form, the mediævalists agreed. I have thought at times that this was a modern instance. He will be punished eventually, no doubt, but meanwhile it is his hour. You, Travis—sir, I mean—are burning to call him out, I see it in your eye, but, ye won't for ye can't. There is a hedge about him, for a time. Then don't be too hard upon me, a weaker man, a man with nerves, that I obeyed him like his dog. Sir—madam—he held Lord Duddingstone's warrant over me like a whip; I ran, I crawled, I fetched and carried for him for near a month, and for what?"

Half a bed in a waterside inn and my bread—no more; and at the end of it, having throttled and thrashed me near to fainting, he drags me to a recruiting sergeant, enlists me, pockets my bounty and makes off. Oh, if there be a God ! ”

“ By your account, Tavy, ye had the poorest of times with the fellow and are well quit of him ! ”

“ Oh, that I were,” whimpered the other, “ but I am not. He knows where I am quartered here. My room-sergeant is in his interest, as I believe. If in London I was used like a hound, here I am served like a blackamoor; nay, a black in service has the better life of it. And, now——” with a side-long glance at the lady, “ ’twill be hell itself,” he groaned.

“ I do not understand. Ye will tell us that he forced ye to marry him to this lady, Tavy——”

“ He did, he did, sir; I could not choose.”

“ Well, I believe ye. He being what he is, and ye what ye are, ye could not choose. And faith, the fellow was too much for the two of us. I, at least, took no change out of him.”

“ That’s true, sir,” assented the other, saluting automatically, and shuddering at the remembrance of the last time that they had met.

“ But for the present,” resumed Travis, “ take what comfort ye can, man, for neither my sister nor I will molest ye. We want no more from ye than your sworn deposition of her marriage, something more formal than the one we hold, and with witnesses to your signature of better standing than a lodging-house keeper and a sea-captain. Ye understand ? ”

The unfortunate man understood only too well. “ Oh, Lord,” he wept, breaking forth afresh, “ that caps the business, and will be my very death. The Major ” (for the wretch there was but one in the garrison) “ will get wind of it, and, begging your pardon, and this lady’s, he is already paying his addresses elsewhere. I had it from his batman, sir. So ye will see that if my testimony is likely to stand in his way I shall be done for in no time. I dare not think to what lengths my sergeant and my casemate will go to earn his dollars; and if I should chance to live through their horse-play, he will give me up upon the English warrant.”

“ In a word,” replied Travis, taking in the situation, “ he has ye all round; the man carries too heavy metal for you and me, Tavy.”

“ Listen to me, poor man,” said Sue, touched to the heart by the deplorable predicament to which his vices and his weakness had conducted the clergyman. “ If I spoke harshly just now, forgive me, as I forgive you; I cannot bear that any one should be afraid of me—of *me*! You have nothing to fear from us. My husband has renounced me. I wish to

have no more to do with him. God, who has punished you for the evil you did to me, may one day, perhaps, punish him. I think He will. But I'll move no finger to harm him, nor ask anything of the man but to be left to myself."

The sun, bright to the last, had dipped behind the hills above Cabrita Point. It was already dusk in the Alameda below, where one of the regimental bands was playing, but there was still light upon the bushy terraces from which Travis and Sue were descending. In a covered way, at which the engineers had been working, a linkman was busy with flint and steel, making a light for the lanthorn he carried, whilst just on before, his master, some officer of importance who had been inspecting the progress of the work, paced slowly in thought, his hands behind him. The lieutenant glanced at him in passing and instantly saluted with the fervour of youth for its hero. "His Excellency!" he whispered, and Susan's eyes widened.

CHAPTER V

WHAT WAS HAPPENING MEANWHILE

AND what was the paper which Travis was carrying ? Reserves may be permissible when a lady is in the case and the question reserved is a point of honour ; but we are privileged : there shall be nothing kept back from us.

To treat this point as it should be treated, one must set back the clock an hour and realise what had been happening to others elsewhere whilst the ladies were tying one another's bonnet-strings, and Sue was awaiting her brother's voice at the door.

In the public gardens is the murmur of a moving crowd and the pit-a-pat of sauntering feet. It is already delicately and coolly dusk beneath the umbrella pines and between the ranks of the taller aloes. The golden glow left behind by the just-sunk sun deepens behind the Laja del Sicar ; the African mountains are marvels of palest turquoise washed with milky primrose, which changes whilst one gazes to something deeper and richer. A reviving freshness blows in off the water where the shipping are hanging their riding-lights. Not yet is it needful to warp everything to the shore or confine it within floating booms. The guard-ships are manning their launches for night-patrol duty. It is war-time, but the leaden foot of Spain has hardly been lifted, and save for the stoppage of the overland mails, and occasional shots exchanged between the British sentries at Forbes's Barrier and the Spaniards on the isthmus, one would not have known that hostilities had commenced.

Here, in the Alamèda, at least is peace ; a band is playing : the long straight walks, which next month will be ploughed to receive plunging shells, are still firm and crowded with moving throngs, officers and their ladies and subalterns, who, having no lady companions, go strolling side by side.

" Have ye seen the grand new major of the Hardenbergs ? " asks Ensign Headington of the 39th Foot, of his friend Elwes, a subaltern in the Engineers.

"Can't say I've enjoyed that privilege yet. Is there much to see?"

"Six feet two inches, and more of him. But you must be careful how ye refer to him in public. He is not the man to take a joke. I have had word from my half-brother in the 41st. The fellow is a fair devil, a wonder with the small-sword, an astonishing shot with the pistol. He was just the master-bull of the mess; no quiet person could call his soul his own."

"You terrify me, Headie. Let me advise ye as a peaceable lad to eschew the fellow's company, and I'll do the like. And, now I come to think on't, this fire-eater has come out at an awkward moment. The Hardenbergs are still dev'lish sore about the affair between Von Toppler and Steadman, ye know. Have ye heard anything fresh?"

"Nothing I should care to have come round to me again. I can tell ye something in confidence, though, if——" Elwes edged nearer to his friend upon the seat they were occupying, and gave his word to be secret.

"It is like this; things get about through the mess-waiters . . . things which ought hardly to be repeated. . . . The Hardenbergs are sore . . . it hasn't worn off. . . . Ye heard about the oath upon the regimental colour? No? Well, the officers' mess swore to have blood for blood, if it took them ten years. But it went beyond play-acting."

"They mean business, ye think?"

"If what I did hear was true, they do mean business, my boy. There was a drawing of lots——"

"Humph; then some one will have been told off to do the job, and the rest will see that he does it. On the whole, Headie, 'tis well to be serving in an English line regiment."

"M'yes; we're all sorts and conditions of men in this garrison, and some of us are rather vindictive. I wouldn't have wondered at anything the Corsican contingent did in that line, nor De la Motte's Germans, who have a lot of those Huguenots in their officers' mess; but to find a parcel of sausage-eating Hanoverians so keen upon the point of honour—— By the way, isn't that one of the 12th—that dark, pretty fellow? No, not that way: the one walking slowly—there; he has just turned in among the trees!"

"Certainly, that is Travis, a new-comer; joined by the April convoy. Not a bad sort, though his regiment sees nothing of him. He is one of the bookish men who are always wanting to distinguish themselves, and has got himself attached to the gunners and goes messing about with time-fuses and things: lucky if he don't blow——"

"Pst! Did ye see that? One of the Hardenbergs nipped

in after him whilst ye were speaking. And that's funny, too: they aren't supposed to come within speech of one another. I know the fellow by sight (which is about all I mean to know of him); 'tis Scrivener, a little beast. I hear he was in trouble with his last mess, and I fancy these Hanoverians find him a bit of a blister. What does *movey sujey* mean?—a man of theirs, a Frenchman——”

“My word, what a frock!” interrupted the other in an awed whisper. “Who the deuce have ye got here? I suppose that'll be the new mode, handier than the hoop, but monstrous inconvenient for a narrow passage. A fine woman, too. Who is she?”

“Can't say. Came out in the *Paladin*, I think. Hillo! eyes right, my boy, that's the man we were speaking of, the big new major! Don't poke, for goodness' sake!”

“Phew, if he looks like that when out for an evening's diversion, what sort of a mug would he wear if he were crossed? Not the sort for a man to walk in front of whistling *Lillibulero*, eh?”

“Not exactly. And who's that?”

“One of Lord M'Leod's savages, I should think, by the way of him. Not but what 'tis a fine regiment, a thousand strong, and can run and climb like so many wild cats. I suppose we must learn to be civil to the creatures, but 'twill seem strange at first. They tell me there are twenty case-mates in the King's Bastion in which we should understand nought but the words of command. That man speaks something he would pull your nose if you said was not English. They call him Cheeseham. I wonder how he spells it, and whom he is looking for.”

Chisholm was seeking Travis, with a wish at his heart, which he fingered and played with, but dared not exhibit. His friend would be crossing the Alameda about this time, upon his way to Prince Frederic Street; he would be spending the evening with Sue. What if he, Chisholm, waylaid him, walked a few steps beside him. Would he be invited to accompany him to the house—to share the stroll? Very shy was the young Scot, as a lover is likely to be whose prospects are overclouded and indefinite, and whose pockets are empty. As to the first and most important obstacle, Chisholm had formed his own theory of the facts disclosed at the Convent, but he quite understood that the lady clung to another. Whilst she held this it was moth-and-candle folly to approach her; yet moths do go to candles, and Chisholm longed for the light and warmth of her dangerous presence. He met the man he sought walking swiftly with a grave face, and, wheeling with a friendly word, fell into step beside him. His friend had something

upon his mind, apparently, for he had little to say, yet, as they left the crowd at the northern entrance of the gardens and found a quiet street, Travis turned to the Scot with a question pitched in the confidential undertone that invites reciprocal treatment.

"What's all this talk about the Hardenbergs, this swearing on the colour? It is all new to me; d'ye know anything of it?"

"Ou, ay, something, but no' muckle, a waif word, as ye nicht say—naething that sud be spokken aboot."

"Nonsense, Chizzie; ye'll speak about it to me. Come, now, has there been a drawing of lots?"

"Ay, so 'tis said. A black bean wass the lot. I wad like fine to ken whilk o' them drew yon bean."

"I could tell ye that," replied Travis after a pause, speaking very low.

"Man, are ye sarious? D'ye ken richt? Whaur's your eevidence?"

"I had it from the fellow's own lips, Chisholm, not ten minutes since."

The Scotsman whistled softly and regarded his friend askance with a face of portentous length and gravity.

"And what is more, I got from him the name of the man of ours who was drawn at the second ballot, the man whom he is to call out!"

"That wull be yoursel', aw'm thenkin' " muttered the other cannily. "But hoo cam' the chiel t'ye by his lane? and hoo cam' he at a'? Whaur wass his frien'? 'Twass mighty ill-guided."

"Quite irregular. And the cartel is in writing."

"That is no fery singular. But, regular or no', I'll act for ye, Travis; yes, if I am brok' for it."

"You would certainly be broke, and (thanking ye all the same)—ye shall not act. For without the Governor's leave (which he won't give) I don't fight. That is one reason. (I have others.) I told the man so."

"Ye tell't him? Man, Travis, ye're a hero!"

"Then heroes are cheaper than I had thought."

"Aiblins they are, but here's ane o' them. I tell ye fairly I could not ha' dune it masel'! Dod, it beats me! But hoo cam' it that efter that, and efter deleeverin' his cartel the loon stood crackin' wi' ye, giving ye parteeculars o' his mess's ungodly cantrips? But there! it beats me! Ye had the nerve to return the cartel!"

"On the contrary, I have it here," tapping his breast.

"Ye have?—then I am by wi' sperin'. Tell's yer tale as it comes. Aw'm all attention."

"You shall have it, barring the man's name."

"Whilk I can mak' a guid guess at, for as I cam' through Irish Town, I met a young shentleman of the Hardenbergs gaeing hastily intill their barracks with a fery hanging face upon him, and aw'm thenking there wull not be twa sic-like even in that corps. But gang on wi' ye."

"The man has been dogging me for weeks, as I can see now, but I would have no speech with him. You see I knew him at home. But ten minutes since, behind the bushes there, he forced himself upon me, and would be slipping this letter into my hand, and was for mumbling something and making off. I knew nothing of his business, or of these beans and oaths then, but knowing what I do of him, I took him by the collar and told him that though he might be serving with Hanoverians, he could surely speak English. I suppose I spoke stiffly, and the poor wretch, what between fear of his mess and fear of me, broke down."

"Saughed?—ye'll not say——"

"Shook and sweated: 'tis a way with him. He whimpered, snivelled, entreated, confessed—in a word, gave me the whole story of how he had drawn the bean, and was forced upon the business. I found a pencil and made him write it upon the back of his cartel; yes, the whole precious story."

"Man, ye winna tell me that he *wrote*——"

"Just that, and put his name to it. Read. I turn down the signature, though I have given him no undertaking. And, see, he owns to having declined to meet me last year, and since then to my intercession having saved him from being forced to eat my cartel."

The Highlander pulled out a long lip. "What sor'rt of messan-doggies hae we in this garrison? Hoo the deil got ye the vratch to set his hand to siccan infamy?"

"A man with a bad conscience will do queer things, Mr. Chisholm, when the devil has him by one ear and his master by its fellow."

"By the *lug*? But ye spik in a figure?"

"No, actually. I stuck to him whilst he wrote, and was of a mind to have tweaked him by the nose when he had done, for I thought it due to the honour of my regiment. But, after all, 'twas my lord his noble father who gave me my commission. And I've forgiven the poor creature before."

"In the Alamèda here—sic a public resort?"

"Such as it is he chose it. But 'tis a wonder we were not interrupted, he upon his knees and all! But it had to be risked. It came upon me that if I let him get off with his paper he would put it about that I declined to meet him,

and, our messes being on the terms ye know, 'twould have been awkward for me and mine——"

"But," broke in Chisholm, with appreciation of good strategy, "whilst ye hold the paper and his remarks on it, he will tell his mess he hasna been able to get at ye. Man, ye will hear nae mair on't."

"From this fellow—no. But if I do, I shall place the affair in my major's hands; and so I told him. But how goes yourself, and how are ye getting on with the curlicue-whirlies?"

"Man, 'tis a fearsome beesniss, their hand-o'-write. As to their spitch, a can juist feel ma fit. I am expeerimenting wi' ilka Moor that I can get a word wi'. Doon at the water-port there is an auld blin' fruit-seller, and there's a couple o' preesoners in Casemate Nineteen that I've forgaithered wi'." The youth had coloured and winced a little at the first question, as a youngster will when surprised in the prosecution of some honourable enterprise a little out of the common; he had warmed as he detailed his method and success.

"But do the beggars understand ye? 'Tis a miracle! Stick to it, and Eliott will appoint ye his agent in Tetuan some day: you Highlanders are reputed judges of cattle. (No offence!) But, indeed and truth, my boy, 'tis the King's English that ye are weak in (don't glare so fiercely; ye can't challenge me, ye know); and if ever ye are to command your regiment——"

"And I think to do that same ane day, Travis. Guid nicht till ye," said the Scot with dignity, perceiving by his companion's slackening stride that he was not to be invited to accompany him farther.

They had made their adieux, but paused, the same thought uppermost in each, and each loath to put it into speech. Said the Scot:

"Can naething be dune wi' this Boyle-Tighe brute? 'Tis nae beesniss o' mine, ye'll be saying——"

"Indeed, but I will say nothing so absurd. Circumstances have brought you very much into it, Chisholm; it would be ridiculous to exclude you from my—our counsels, and I'm not going to do so. Oh, I know what you are going to tell me: the fellow is already at his tricks elsewhere. But what can one do?—You or I? Nothing!"

"Aw'm nane so sure o' thot. I am inclined to hae a smack at him masel', hit or miss."

"And break yourself, man, without doing the least good in the world. Hear my parable. In Oxford on market days the cattle have the run of the High. I once met a crowd pelting around a corner into the Turl, bawling, 'Get out of

the way, Robinson's mad bull is loose ! ' Ye may think that I jumped for an entry ; but there was a little bald-headed, pot-bellied draper fellow who stood his ground, saying, ' I won't get out of the way ; what right has Robinson to bring his mad bulls here ? ' "

" Eh, but he did ? And what next ? "

" The brute came round the corner and took that fat little draper fellow one toss—only one, mind."

" He wass a deid man, aw'm thenking."

" Stone dead, my friend. Ye understand me ? "

" I mind ye, Travis, and I thank ye ; but I loo' thot little draper fallow like a brither, and I'd like fine to tak' ma toss if 'tis God's wull, ay, gin it sud land me in a tow's-eend," he muttered.

" Ye are a fool, Mr. Chisholm ! "

" Aiblins I am, Mr. Travis ; the Chisholms are something that way. But I'll tell ye anither thing. I haf kenned that Irish shentleman for this four, five months mair or less, and I tell ye fairly I distasted the man before I kent what he was, and the better I kent him the waur I likit him."

" A quarrel at Falmouth ? "

" Never ane wry word ; but we're juist made that way, this shentleman and masel'. And the noo that I ken him weel and have seen intill the coorse, black heart of him, I hate him with ma hail sawl and mind. And, Travis, ye sall see that I wull be the deith o' him yet. . . . I dinna ken juist hoo, but ye'll see." The lad nodded, glowering as though he saw again before him the great red jowl of his enemy bound within a mort-cloth.

Travis, himself not the most patient of men, gravely looked his wonder at a novel phenomenon, a bed of live lava beneath the northern snow.

" Ye shall not move without me," he said at length, extending his hand.

" I will not," said the Scot, taking it, and went, neither having breathed a certain name which was upon both their tongues.

CHAPTER VI

MORE MEANWHILE HAPPENINGS

MEANWHILE, in the Alamèda the throng is thickening. Two ladies are approaching, unescorted ; the buxom widow of the *Paladin*, who by this time is beginning to feel her feet, and has made acquaintance, is taking the air with her hostess. She moves sedately, the cynosure of all eyes ; the men ogling her for her demure good looks, their ladies to get hints for their maids from fineries nearer to the fashion than any other lady's upon the Rock.

Mrs. Hollinghurst is pleasantly aware of the interest which she excites ; for her own part, as this is one of the first evening promenades in which she has participated, there is much for her to see and to wonder at.

"Do tell me, my dear," she whispers. "What are those women doing abroad so little dressed ?—no bonnets !"

"La, Mrs. Hollinghurst, have ye never heard tell of the mantilla ? 'Tis the Spanish female mode, my dear, and most unbecoming, we all agree. Wonderful figures, I admit, but all their countrywomen have. The creatures are what we call Rock Scorpions, families which were here when Rooke took the place and were allowed to take the oath and remain. (Please not to look at them—combs, fans and all !) We rarely admit them to our society ; they are under suspicion as to their loyalty, my dear, and I hear the Governor was of half a mind to send them packing last week when he put the Jews and Genoese out of the place. But here come the men. Mercenary creatures ! The terms of your poor husband's will have not taken long in getting round. (It was in the News Letter that the Packet brought out.) I suppose it was stated correctly in the main ? You inherit the residue on conditions only of visiting his grave here within twelve months of the poor gentleman's death ?"

"Quite true, Mrs. Lamb : he was a dear, kind soul and

very good to me. But what interest my affairs can have for gentlemen and perfect strangers——”

“La, madam, you are too innocent for this world. Did they not pester ye with declarations on board ship? No! Then, trust me, ’twas because they did not know what they were carrying. That tall, fine Irish major, now, who has called twice already (and found ye not at home, by the greatest chances in the world), I’ll be sworn that man has been biting his nails to think of the opportunities he threw away on the voyage.”

“Threw away? Mrs. Lamb! I declare he was most civil and amusing.”

“Talked love, I’ll be bound, but did not propose. No, my dear, he was playing with ye, and is sorry for it by this. Ye will hear more from him yet. And Susan’s friend, the gentleman who saved your hand——”

“*He is a gentleman!*” interposed Mrs. Hollinghurst with conviction, and immediately blushed, for the man of whom she was thinking was passing at the moment. Mrs. Lamb saw him too and laughed.

“Good evening to ye, Major Justin; and will ye pass us without speaking?”

The man, who was walking slowly and alone, his hands clasped behind him, and his eyes fixed upon the fading beauties of the western sky, started, smiled, and bowed.

“A thousand pardons, my dear ladies!—I—I confess I was thinking.”

“But it seems ye can act too, Major, upon occasion. What is this they are telling of ye? Was it last night, or the night before, that ye disarmed that drunken madman?”

“O, the mess-waiter? Have ye heard of that stupid business? Really, I wonder at the little folks seem to have to talk about.”

“To hear him, Mrs. Hollinghurst! He accuses us of gossip,” laughed the chaperon. “We had best be moving on. But do tell us, Major, how ye managed it: they say he is one of the strongest men in the garrison, and that ye mastered him as if he had been a child, and without drawing your side-arm. Is it true? I do assure ye it is all the talk among the men; and we poor things, being by virtue of our sex naturally curious, would be obliged to ye for some first-hand information. Is it the fact that the creature cleared the mess-house, and drove Major Tulkinghorne out of the window and Colonel Trigge beneath the table?”

“Hush! hush! I beg!” implored the officer. “I can only tell ye what I saw.”

“And what ye did.”

"Oh, that was simple ; you must know that years ago, when serving in the East, some of us youngsters, who had very little to do, amused ourselves by taking lessons in wrestling from native jugglers and so forth. 'Twas a Yellow-boy's trick, no more ; sleight-of-hand, you may say, needing neither courage nor strength, I do assure ye.

"And now, tell me how ye like Gibraltar ?" He relinquished Mrs. Lamb to another acquaintance, and turning to her companion, dropped his voice to the confidential pitch, to exclude, if he might, the little circle of men who were gathering around the ladies as wasps to honey. It had not crossed his mind that his own acquaintance could be an object to any one ; but a certain exploit, the one to which the lady had alluded, which reflected credit upon himself, and upon no one else concerned, had aroused curiosity in the bosoms of both sexes in a small society, hedged in, shut out from the world, hard up for subjects of discussion, and empty-pated exceedingly.

It was plain that the Major would not be left long in sole enjoyment of the lady's company. This, men were saying, would be the new arrival, old Hollinghurst's young widow ; well provided for, too : the Colonel's means surprised his executors. Did those fellows who came out with her in the *Paladin* know, think ye ? They will have learnt by this ; trust that swaggering Irishman.

The chaperon, Mrs. Lamb, was something of a character. Men were greeting her as men greet those from whom they hope to receive ; spelling for introductions, the hour and the place seemed propitious. A circle was forming, when into the midst pushed a commanding presence, the height and bulk of a tall, fine man, with a purpose formed and the resolution to carry it through : Major Boyle had arrived.

He dealt first with the ring of ladies' men, treating each in succession to the level stare that gave notice of dismissal as plainly as words. He greeted none, reserving that condescension for the fairer sex.

"Ha, Mrs. Hollinghurst, your servant, madam ; I am overjoyed to see ye. I trust ye have entirely recovered from the fatigue of the voyage ; but as I live, madam, the question is needluss, your looks reply for ye, begad ! Will ye do me the favour to present me to your friend ?—Mrs. Lamb, your humble servant ; Mrs. Hollinghurst and mesilf are old friends, fellow travellers ; we came out together on the *Paladin*, a dry ship, madam, and roomy, but on the say, however commodious the quarters, one must, as ye are aware, either quarrel or be friends. The leedy has no doubt informed ye, madam, that we did not quarrel. Ha ! ha ! In a word, we were very agreeably thrown upon one another's society (for, I give ye

me word, there was hardly another sowl on board with whom a person of condition could exchange a remark), and the sister service scarcely counts, d'ye see ? ”

“ La, Major,” laughed the widow, “ it is all very well to be saying so ashore, but we didn't hear ye talk in this manner on the quarter-deck. Did we, Major Justin ? ”

“ Speaking for myself, purely for myself, Mrs. Hollinghurst,” said Justin with affable gravity, “ I found the *Paladin's* company agreeable fellows enough.”

“ Are ye speakin' of the marine gunners' mess or the fo'ksle ? ” asked the other superciliously over his shoulder. It was his first recognition of the other's presence. There was a moment's silence. The circle had perceptibly widened at the Irishman's coming ; it broke now ; men remembered engagements ; it never does a fellow good to have been present at an altercation. The more part went ; a couple of youthful gabies stayed, fingering smooth chins, curious as to what would befall, possibly too awkward to escape, one of the twain tingling with resentment at the insult offered to his service.

“ We were saying——” resumed Justin, addressing the ladies.

“ Ye have not answered my question, sir,” interposed Boyle with mordant distinctness.

“ Then I must apologise for the incivility ; no offence intended, Boyle. What was it ye wanted to know ? With whom I messed aboard ? Why, with yourself to be sure, man ! ”

“ Darkness is falling : we had best be getting along home, my dear,” hurriedly urged Mrs. Lamb.

“ May I escort you ? ” asked Justin. Both ladies opened their lips in assent, but Boyle swung his massive person between them, offering his arm.

“ Dark ? Preposterous, madam ; quite the plisanest half-hour of the twenty-four. Mrs. Hollinghurst, I am sure, will be delightud with the Alameda by moon-rise ; the band will be playing for another twenty minutes. Permit me to offer ye my ar'rm, my dear leedy, to the south end and back.”

Whilst speaking, he had turned the broad of his back to Justin, and now, with a sudden half-pace to the rear, so managed his heel as to bring it down with emphasis and intent within the fraction of an inch of his rival's toe. Onlookers started, the ladies saw and were visibly disconcerted.

“ My foot, I think, Boyle,” laughed the Englishman, good-naturedly ignoring the insult. “ But, if it's as dark as all that, I should say we had all of us better be moving. What say you, ladies ? ”

"Unquestionably. Oh, certainly. Do, please. Oh, thankye, Major Justin," cried the women hurriedly and in a breath, accepting the arms he offered whilst adroitly changing front. Off sailed the three ("a corvette with a couple of prizes grappled abeam," muttered the angry subaltern of marines). The towering figure of the Irishman was left *planté* in the middle of the walk.

"How long will that fellow remain in irons?" whispered the Jolly. Boyle heard, but had business on hand that forbade him to take up a quarrel with a beggarly lieutenant. He strode in pursuit, keeping a calculated distance, selecting his moment to intervene, and, as it happened, delayed too long. Turning from the landward gate of the gardens into a lane, the three were mounting a narrow flight of steps leading to a higher terrace. Putting on pace, he was upon them swiftly. They had left the last of the afterglow behind them upon the tops of the garden trees; the alley, steep and ill-paved, was dusk underfoot; the pursuer failed to distinguish where the increasing gradient changed to steps, caught his toe, and saving himself from a sprawl with difficulty, was surprised into an oath. The hot word and the clink of his scabbard upon the stone caught the ear of a personage descending the flight above, hidden by the turn. For the moment the small mischance whetted the edge of Boyle's ill-humour; thrusting his bulky person almost roughly between Mrs. Lamb and the wall, he had passed the party before they were aware of his intention, and, turning, halted, blocking the alley.

"A moment, if you please, leedies—and you, sir! Mrs. Hollinghurst, madam, permit me, I beg, the honour of a wor'rd with ye in privut."

The lady addressed tightened her hold upon the arm of her cavalier. "With me, sir?—here?—impossible!" She caught her breath. "I do not understand," she recommenced faintly, beginning to tremble; the bulk, the height, the virile force of the man upon the steps above her affecting her imagination. Some women are to be won so; marriage by capture is the oldest form of the rite, nor was the captive always unwilling, unless human nature has changed enormously.

"Shall I? Must I? Oh, *what* am I to do?" she communed with herself, and found no answer. The small fingers within the crook of Justin's arm fluttered; the arm closed upon them in kindly reassurance. It sped, the electric thrill between man and woman. "Oh, moment one and infinite," the future blessedness or regrets of two lives hung upon an instant decision, and for a third of the party, bloody and shameful death. So spin the Fates. Thus heartened, the lady spoke.

"I—I fail to understand ye, sir. I must decline."

"It shall be me juty and me privilege to make ye onderstand me, madam. I offer ye me escor't, madam." He crooked an arm and stood a moment, expectant of her acceptance, bending toward her and descending a step. She, retreating, clung the closer to Justin. Her wooer rushed upon his fate.

"Since ye refuse me the privacy which the meanust of mankind has the right to demand onder the circumstances, I will say in public what was intendud, and indeed is fitter for your own ear. I make to ye my declaration, madam; I am, I profess mesilf, and ever will be your devotud servant."

"One would have supposed you to be our master, sir," snapped Mrs. Lamb, with recovered spirit. "Will you have the goodness to allow us to pass?"

"You have my full permission to go to hell, madam!" blurted the unfortunate lover, beside himself with passion. "It was not to you that I was declaring mesilf."

"O, fie, sir!" cried the lady, with a small shriek, and picking up her petticoat, she was for passing. Justin also made a step, Mrs. Hollinghurst moving with him, her hand still tightly within his arm.

Boyle, who had given ground for a moment, stepped to the front again. It was now or never; this damned, cool Englishman would not commit himself, it seemed, for anything short of the lie direct (which is hard to give to a silent man) or for a blow, for which there had been no shadow of excuse even if women had not been present. Yet stop her he must. This method of attack has the disadvantage of being incapable of being repeated; a woman may condone, may accept a single outbreak of unbridled passion for which her own beauty has given excuse; but not a second—the critics of her own sex forbid that. Boyle, experienced in such matters, knew all this, and knew the risk of delay, knew too that he was staking everything upon a weak hand. He spoke.

"No, madam," laying a finger upon her arm. "I await my answer. The wor'rd lies with ye. Choose, me dear leedy, once and for all, bechune a soldier, a rude soldier, madam, but a man, madam, as th' Almighty made um—bechune *me* and this—this person here. Again, and for the last time, I offer ye the ar'm and the pro-tiction of a gintleman!"

This time it was both the ladies who cried out: Mrs. Hollinghurst clapping her little hands to her ears. Justin interposed.

"Really, Boyle, ye have—inadvertently, no doubt—ex-

pressed yourself unfortunately. The lady is in no posture to listen to more. I beg ye to reflect that this is not the place, nor the hour——”

“*Will* ye hold your tongue, sir ? ” burst from the Irishman, by this time past calculating consequences.

“Willingly. I should be sorry, for your sake, to have to report this——”

“*Report what ?* Stand where you are. Show a light here ! ” A personage was descending from above ; he was past the turn ; his linkman, leaning from the guard-rail of the upper flight, hung a lanthorn over, disclosing Boyle’s hand in the act of releasing his sword-hilt, revealing his congested and furious face, his posture of menace, and the scared, white countenances of the women.

The speaker was the Governor himself, General Sir George Eliott, in a fine, cold displeasure.

“Your name and regiment, sir ? What ! Major Boyle ? No, don’t excuse yourself to me, sir ; I can trust my own ears, I think, and have heard enough, and more than enough. What ? You had *not* challenged this gentleman ? But with your next breath you would have done, if, indeed, you had not cut him down first. Yes, sir, ‘cut him down’ is what I said. Your hand was upon your sword, sir. What may I infer from that ? ”

The offender had nothing to say, and wisely remained silent. This man might ruin him with his next word if crossed. ’Twas war-time, and such fellows as he are useful in war-time : his fortune hung upon that consideration, and no other.

The ladies burst into tears. Mrs. Lamb would probably have fainted had there been the smallest of conveniences for fainting. Of the women, the great man took no account whatever : the charge he held from the King engrossed his thought day and night ; this, and the men whom he commanded, these two among others. He looked hard upon each in turn, read their faces, and acted upon what he saw. He turned to Justin. “You, sir, have carried yourself like an officer and a gentleman : I bid ye good-night.” He faced Boyle, “You, sir, will remain under arrest in your quarters for fourteen days. Report yourself to me at the end of your term. Had ye drawn but an inch, but one single inch, sir, I’d have broke ye. Precede me, if ye please.”

Major Cornelius Boyle reached his quarters in the blackest of ill-humours. The man hardly knew himself in his novel environment. In the 41st his tyrannical whims had pressed like a nightmare upon the existences of brother officers, mere ordinary men, who had judged it wiser to submit to each

successive demand than to throw away life in front of a pistol which had never missed its victim yet.

Here, at Gibraltar, the man had found himself handicapped by his record on landing, snubbed, set down and put upon his good behaviour from the first day. More galling yet, he had met his overmatch in coolness and address in a man of his own rank. His position was shaken, was comparable to that of a big fellow, lately the cock of a school from which he has been expelled for bullying, who finds himself under strict surveillance at the establishment to which he has been unwillingly admitted, and is unable to resume his malpractices save at serious risk.

The night was warm; he tossed his hat aside, loosened his stock, and mused glumly for a while. His orderly entered, unaware of his master's presence, astonished to find him sitting in the dark, alone and sober.

"Is Ensign Scrivener in barracks? Send him to me."

The lad entered, half scared, half fluttered at the summons.

We have met him before. He was by this time by way of becoming a soldier in spite of himself. After his final escapade at Colchester, his long-suffering father had hardened his heart and was not to be appeased by anything short of exile and active service. An enforced exchange into a Hanoverian regiment quartered at Gibraltar had followed; and here was the scapegrace heir to fifteen thousand a year messing with officers who resented his intrusion into their corps, and showed it by speaking German in his presence. As the drill, regimental orders, and words of command were foreign, the miserable youth must perforce begin at the beginning, and was even driven to complaisance, if not generosity, to the orderly who tied his queue. Worst of all, he was reduced to living upon his pay. His mess was poor and suspicious, without money to lend, and His Excellency had expelled the Jews upon considerations of victualling. Alas for the Hon. Frederick! Shall we weep for a youthful man-about-town whose times of fatness are over, whose visits to Newmarket, whose dalliance with the ladies of the New Italian Opera are memories which embitter the sordidness of an unappetising present? In truth, I find myself unable to weep.

"Shut that door, Mr. Scrivener, and be seated, sir. We will, if you please, converse in a low tone, sir; my man is as trusty as another, but—ye onderstand? 'Tis my belief that these fellows know more English than we suspect."

The youth nodded, and felt himself swell with importance. What might be coming?

"I am a new-comer, Mr. Scrivener, but in what afflicts the honour of the Hardenbergs I am as staunch as the oldust

mimber of our mess. As ye are aware, I was not present at a certain ceremony, the matter of the colour. Ye take me?" The lad flushed painfully, and wished himself anywhere but where he was. A tremendous duty had devolved upon him, one of the youngest men of his mess, and as it chanced, and, as we know already, a craven. It had fallen to him by lot, and his comrades were allowing him to execute this duty at his leisure and in his own way; he had been given to understand that there was no galloping hurry in the matter so that the business were put through, when it was put through, to the satisfaction of the mess. Meanwhile, this duty had eaten and drunk with him, slept and walked with him. "I understand, Major," said he, with dry lips.

"Ye drew the black bean, I think. No words, Mr. Scrivener, just a nod. I thank ye. And, while I think of it, there was a second ballot, unless I've been misinformed. Now, with which ensign of theirs were ye paired off, may I ask?"

The poltroon quailed visibly, moistening dry lips; the Major, thinking his own thoughts, failed to notice his agitation, and intervened.

"But there, don't tell me. No names. I prefer not to know. It might easily be inconvenient. Well, as to yer juty; I am sure, sir, that ye have done all that is possible in the time at your disposal. 'Tis an affair that cannot be driven post-haste. But, onless I am misinformed, ye have not up till to-night had the opporchunity for which ye are seeking. Just so. By the by, ye have not yet given yer proofs, I think? Just so. Yer day will come; all in good time, Mr. Scrivener; but in this matter, if ye will be guided by me, ye will not do anything hastily. The Governor is—is forewarned, sir. I may as well tell ye that I am ondher a fortnight's arrest at this moment for so much as speaking—*speaking* to a man of the 12th—I am.

"In Sir George's present humour, Mr. Scrivener, it would probably cost ye your commission to be seen in the same tavern with a gentleman of their mess. You will not get the opporchunity yet, believe me."

The youth experienced an immense relief; his bosom heaved, it was reprieve.

"I—I——" he began, but Boyle raised a finger.

"Ye are justly jealous for your reputetion, sir; say no more. The mess shall not misconceive ye, I pass ye my wor'd. I will merely beg ye to do nothing for a fortnight. Then I will advise ye further. And now, good-night to ye."

The lad left the room walking upon feathers; he had at any rate another fortnight of reputation left to him. Boyle yawned.

"*Faugh a ballagh!* as they say in the Rangers, "'tis good to be seein' yer way. This talk will tie him up until I am about again, and able to attind to me business. If I could anyway get a smack at me fince I would always clear ut, or fall like a gintleman; but to be crossed at me lep by an omadaun—no!" He flung off his clothes and was asleep in two minutes.

CHAPTER VII

"THE LAST INFIRMITY OF NOBLE MINDS"

"THE last infirmity of noble minds" is not necessarily ambition, nor was the instance which we are now to consider an easily recognisable manifestation of the august frailty.

In truth, there be as many types of great souls as of their foils, and to each its peculiar besetment; but, speaking broadly, the noble and the base alike fall into two categories, and these are not, as might be supposed, the good and the bad, or the gentle and the simple, the prescient and the obtuse; no, nor male and female, but just Masters and Servants, intelligences which, whether they inhabit kaisers or slaves, cow-punchers or housewives, can only express and content themselves by governing; and that other class, equally right and necessary, with innate possibilities of grandeur, which, wearing, it may be, the trappings of kings, or the navy's fustians, are essentially servants.

To every individual of either category life presents its touchstone, and watches the master-soul step forth and grasp at empery, empery, at all costs to self, and to those dearer than self; empery at expense of ideals and character, or nobly resign its opportunity; or again, if the trial be of one fundamentally created for service, observes what form the sacrifice assumes, and how, if it be accepted, the chance is used.

Our Major was of—which class, think you? Turn it over in your minds, my masters (be assured he had never turned it over in his).

When His Excellency, and His Excellency's linkman had descended the steps, Boyle stalking sullenly before them, and had passed out of hearing, the ladies simultaneously gasped, loosened their tongues, and, so to say, flung themselves upon their cavalier for corroboration and support. "He said," "I said," "Did ye evers?" flew like rice at a wedding. The way to Prince Frederic Street was shortened by breathless recapitulation of wrongs, the wretch had spoilt a lady's *début*, wasted her frock and her evening, and pursued her with

importunate attentions to the edge of a brawl. "A monster, my dear!" "A brute, my love!" "What breeding can the creature have had? One must think that in his own country (Ireland, no doubt) the male chases the female with a club!"

The absent was very much in the wrong and vehemently abused; perhaps too vindictively, thought Justin, critically silent and awaiting reaction. This delayed, indeed, until recognition of his own behaviour having been unstintingly accorded, and hearty good-nights wished, he had covered and turned to go.

"La! what an adventure, my love," laughed Mrs. Lamb, safe upon her own threshold, the door in her hand.

"And, what a *man*!" simpered Mrs. Hollinghurst under her breath, unaware that the Major was still within hearing.

Justin's ears burnt. He knew, few better, the mysterious sexual attraction felt by women towards the imperiously selfish, the brutally dominant of the other sex. Without reasoning upon his observations he knew, as any one of us who is over forty must know, that from the steps of the Throne downward, the square-jawed, hard-eyed Master of Men holds woman in the hollow of his hand. The memory of the Reichs-Kanzler who precipitated a European convulsion, of which the end is still unseen, is a cult with the womanhood of Germany; the Corsican who sent armies cheering to certain death never lacked a woman's heart to play with, break, and toss aside. Justin, watching a narrower stage, had seen what he had seen. Twenty years before had he not beheld the lady of his heart captivated against her judgement, and despite her will? Her daughter, his ward, the new-found and already tenderly beloved child, for whom he was feeling a father's solicitude, and at whose feet he was laying the unspoiled devotions and tenderness of a heart that had missed its mark and never known the delights of paternity, this more than daughter, the offspring of his lost Agatha, had fallen a victim to this rake-ruffian in her turn; and now, before the Moloch-altar of sense and greed stood Julia Hollinghurst, a third victim garlanded and petulantly smiling.

Nothing but his accidental presence had saved the woman from abject surrender. But he could not always be at her side. Nor had he warrant. She did not care for him (he thought), nor he for her (he believed; being wrong upon both points). And yet, was it not his duty to save her? And Sue? He distrusted the girl's future, and rightly, whilst Boyle, her husband, or semi-husband, was above ground.

Fourteen days' arrest had the Governor awarded. Fourteen days of grace were permitted him, no more. But

much may be done in a fortnight by a determined man. Which way did Duty beckon ?

Hunting men and soldiers are what they are by virtue of swift decisions. The commander who goes reconnoitring and ogling up to his kopjes never catches his De Wet, and a fox-hunter who must have a look at his fences before having a smack at them is seldom where we all of us would like to be—in the first half-dozen. India was not won for us by men who counted heads and weighed chances, nor would the Major have emerged from the ruck upon such lines.

The happiness, the welfare, the safety of two women depended, as it seemed to Justin, upon what use he made of these days of grace. Some men, brave men, even, would have sate them down to consider, to balance, to review the past and forecast the future ; would have had their hot fits and their cold, hearkening alternately to the higher and to the lower impulses ; would have resolved and weakened, and found themselves upon the fourteenth evening where they had stood on the first, and with slackened wills and shaking knees, allowed themselves to be whipped by the imminent event up to the leap which they should have taken in the first fine enthusiasm of the run.

Justin asked no man for a lead ; he went, late as it was, straight to the Convent, and sent in his name for an audience.

Something unusual was afoot. In the anteroom a young Moor, his head bloodily bandaged, squatted impassively under the surgeon's hands.

"Justin of the 12th ? Send him in," said His Excellency's voice from behind a half-opened door.

The Major entered ; His Excellency, who was standing, acknowledged his caller's salute with a kindly nod, both hands being engaged at the moment in drying a damp and crumpled scrap of paper over the flame of a shaded candle. Other scraps strewed the cloth.

"Glad to see ye, Justin. I need your help. Sit ye down and tell me what ye make of these. 'Tis a cypher despatch from Tangier, as I think. The pieces were pellets a minute since. We took them from the messenger's ears. His boat was sunk by a Spanish Guarda Costa off the point, and the fellow has taken a small wound, but swam ashore and made his way to me unhelped."

Whilst speaking Sir George had dried the last of the scraps and laid it beside the rest. All were of brittle, Spanish-made paper, soiled and minutely creased by the treatment to which they had been subjected. To reconstitute a legible document from such materials promised to be a tedious business ; and had Justin come to his chief obsessed by the impatience

which is the shadow of indecision, he might have found it impossible to concentrate his faculties upon the task which awaited him ; but the man's mind was made up, and at rest ; there was nothing more for him to do at the moment ; he grappled whole-heartedly with his task.

"They fit, sir ; see," he remarked at the end of a few minutes.

"But where is the writing ?" asked the Governor incredulously, peering beside him, glasses on nose.

"Upon the other side, possibly," suggested Justin. "Ah, we have it !"

"Eh ? What's the man thinking of ? 'Tis not our agreed cypher. I have no key to this. Tut, tut, this looks ill. One would suppose some one has seized his papers and found the key. What script is this, sir ?"

"'Tis the Canarese character, sir, but mighty poorly writ, and spells mere nonsense. Oh, stay ! it reads backwards, and from the bottom. Give me a sheet or two of paper, sir, I beg, and a minute——"

"As many as ye please, major," replied the great man encouragingly. "If ye have the right sow by the ear, I'll attend your leisure."

Justin figured steadily and with few deletions for a couple of minutes. "I make it run thus, Sir George.

"They ha'e garred his drover in tolbooth lie,
And ta laird of Stobs maun ca' his ain kye.
Vail ta gillie qua brings ye these,
A baxter's dizzen o' gowd bawbees."

"Is it sense ? Can ye make anything ?"

The Governor was taking snuff, and enjoyed his sneeze before replying. "I didna think Logie was among the prophets. 'Tis not from the *Reliques*, anyway ! Plain ? Oh, 'tis plain enough, I am sorry to say, thanks to yourself, sir. Stobs is my own bye-name, which none but a Scotsman would have known, or used. Which of my countrymen this may be is the question ? For, though it is a hundred chances to one that it is from my friend Mr. Logie, His Majesty's Agent in Barbary, yet I should like well to know why he, if this be from him, has not couched the whole of it in this Indian tongue if he felt reduced to using it at all, and so writ me at large and particularly."

"I conceive from the lettering, sir, that whoever wrote this has forgot near all the Canarese he ever knew save the character, and he is weak even in that."

"Which might explain it. I mind he was in the Indies years since as a youth. Plainly he dared use no European

speech. Barbary swarms with renegadoes. But I'd have thought he might have risked broad Scots ballad terms ; and yet—— Now I think on't, there was a Gordon of the Catholic branch quartered in San Roque not a year since. I opine, then, 'tis Logie, and my friend must have been in extremity before he would send such a screed as yon." The speaker paced the room. " Sir, I will not conceal my predicament from ye ; and indeed you, whom I have to thank for reading my riddle, cannot have missed its drift." The men's eyes met across the lighted table. Justin bowed, the Governor's face was of the gravest. " It stands thus, sir : His Most Catholic Majesty has bought the goodwill of the Shereef. The ports will be closed to us ; no more cattle-boats from Tetuan."

The dry admission covered a big fact and an ugly one. King George's Spanish stronghold always had been, and was still, dependent for its meat supplies upon the neutrality of the Moorish Sultan. The first blow from Madrid had choked this source. " The Emperor of Barbary has failed us, Justin, and, as I understand this, poor Logie has been arrested and is in fear of his life. Nothing less. His messenger might tell us something, but the boy speaks nought but his Moghrebi, and to my sorrow I know not where to put my hand upon a competent and trusty interpreter." The Governor pinched his lip, thinking of the hybrid crew of Jews and Genoese whom he had expelled at the opening of the siege. Justin spoke.

" There is an ensign in the 73rd, sir, young Chisholm, who has the very gift of tongues, and has worked at this Barbary speech. It is just a chance that he may prove useful. Have I your permission to bring him to you ? "

" You will do so to-night, sir, and I thank ye again : but, first for this business of your own ? "

This private concern of the Major's had dwindled somewhat since it had found itself in the neighbourhood of an impending need which might easily become public calamity. Yet, there was no self in his claim, and he was able to meet the Governor's eye. He threw up his chin and spoke.

" I desire your good leave, Sir George, to resign my commission, within a week if it may be, but at longest within fourteen days."

Elliott's eye widened, and there were slight changes in the set of a noble and otherwise immobile countenance which found it kindly and left it harsh and anxious. The man governed the swift umbrage which drove the blood to his eyes, and having paced the room twice, and well considered the matter, delivered himself thus :

" This is an outcome of to-night's altercation ? "

"I cannot deny it, sir."

"Has the fellow sent ye his friend?"

"He has not, sir."

"Have ye sent him yours? As man to man, sir!"

"As man to man, sir, I have not."

"Then, why, in God's name?—I have it! Ye are proposing to do so."

"Your pardon, Sir George, but ye push me too hard. I had hoped——"

He stopped, the Governor had stayed him with a gesture of his hand, and Justin, with every belief in his cause, and with full intention to persist in his resolve, found, as thousands of men had found already, and more were destined to find, that he was in the presence of a great man. In truth George Augustus Eliott was one of the greatest men of his time, a leader of men, and a master of the art of war. He had set himself in youth to study every nut and pinion of the machine, called an army in the field, had learnt all that the masters of the craft in France and in Germany could teach him, had made a dozen campaigns, taken his wounds, seized his chances, had been mentioned in despatches times without number. But, far and away beyond the mere soldier of fortune was he; as an infantryman he was unsurpassed; as a trainer and leader of cavalry he has never had a superior in the British army since Cromwell, whilst he was an engineer before there was a corps of engineers in the service. This was of course known to Justin, but he was now to make acquaintance with the heart of the man himself, the fine humanity which busied itself unweariedly with the comforts of his command; yes, with the bed and food of the common soldier, and with the farriery, forage, and saddlery of his horse. This was the man who, during a winter march in Germany, slept with his troops upon the bare ground, and would share their exact rations, denying himself meat, who drank nothing but water, and who throughout the siege now opening sent to the public market the presents of fruit made to him by the Spanish General.

To such a leader as this, such a subordinate as our friend Justin finds it painful to give pain.

"Mr. Justin," said the Governor at length, "I will do for you what I would not do for another of your rank in this garrison. I will reason this out with ye. Draw up that chair, sir; sit.

"To begin, I might grant your request on conditions: say that ye sailed, or at least reported yourself on shipboard upon parole not to land again, within the time ye assign. But that would not please ye."

"It would not, sir; and, indeed, since ye are so good as

to treat me thus, I can do no less than place my case in your hands."

"This is better; I had hoped for your confidence," smiled His Excellency, extending his snuff-box, and settling himself to listen.

"It is no question of my own honour, Sir George—as to that I have passed my word to ye; but the honours of two ladies are touched, and one of the two is my ward."

"Ye had best apprise me of all the circumstances, sir," said the Governor, and Justin, still willing to lay his life in the scale to serve his gentle friends, laid his honour there instead, with a sigh.

"I perceive," said the Governor, when the recital ended, "we have a notorious person upon our hands, a devil of a fellow, who is neither to hold nor bind. I had his *dossier*, his history, sent to me from Home. He has tangled a dozen skeins already, and you, sir, are for letting him kill you by way of disentangling yours."

"You are pleased to smile at me, Sir George, but, for myself, I make no doubt whatever of killing him."

The quiet, absolute assurance of the reply pleased the old soldier; his mouth worked slightly. "An excellent spirit with which to go upon the ground, sir; but I remember that this person has the bloods of six gentlemen upon his hands already, and as a swordsman has certainly a foot the advantage of ye in reach. But this is neither here nor there. It must not, and shall not come to this. Nay, I am not playing the commander at the moment, but the man, your friend, if ye will let me. Mr. Justin, ye are seeking to know your duty and to do it, but there are higher duties and lower (as to which presently); for the moment I would have ye notice that ye are, as it seems to me, asking to see more than God Almighty is willing to show ye. Tak' patience, man; the end is not in fourteen days, nor in forty; no, nor four hunder. Ye are for forcing the Lord's hand; ye are for driving maitters till an issue, whether He wills it or no. Has He nae ither wark for ye, think ye? (I put King George, and my puir self, his servant and your commander, clean oot o' coort for the moment.) The case I lay before ye is as between yer Maker and yersel'. Believe me, sir, no good wark is dune by ootrinning one's commeesion.

"In the maitter o' the wumman, noo"—the great man's voice dropped deeper and deeper into his native Doric—"a leddy's honour, the honours o' twa leddies, are precious things; and between you and me, sir, we will safeguard them, even from this rumbustious callant; but, say we were to fail, what were twa or twa hunder siclike beside the honour of the

thing we guard, you and I, under God ? The fortress committed to us, the apple o' King Geordie's e'e ? his point of honour ! D'ye feel in yer inmost sawl that yer duty towards a lassie ootsets yer duty t'yer King, and to me, *me* ? . . . I canna spare ye, Justin. Nay, man, the King we baith sairve canna spare ye."

The great, brick-red face, with its broad snuffy upper lip, was looming half across the table ; the dominant eyes pressed for an answer. Never in his life had Justin felt as he felt then, torn by the disintegrating claims of conflicting emergencies.

Out came the great, hard sword-hand of his chief. "Tak' it, mon, stan' by me. Ma conscience ! but I want the likes o' ye, Justin !"

There was no resisting the voice and presence that had never failed in their appeal to a soldier, which had rallied the breaking ranks amid the carnage of Fontenoy, and had steadied and heartened fever-shaken troopers in the night attacks around Havanna. The men's hands met. Justin's bosom swelled ; here was a leader worth dying for, if need were.

It was thus that Eliott ruled.

"That's weel. And now, sir, to business ; the King's business. I was at Rock Gun Battery at sunset. We have a fine prospect from there, better than from the Signal Station, and, unless I am deceived, this pause in the operations is nearing its end. There are more tents behind San Roque, and something doing on the isthmus. I opine that the first attack will be directed against my North Front."

"Forbes's Barrier and the Queen's Lines ?" whispered Justin, all close attention.

"Yes ; probably there. Now, to meet them I must have good troops under a good man. 'Twill be no affair of gunnery when it comes, but a night attack, and close fighting ; his best men against my best.

"I shall post you, sir, in the Queen's Lines."

Justin arose saluting, a grave joy upon his face. "My wing, sir, will be proud——"

"Nay, your *regiment*, sir, the good old 12th Foot, ay, and with yourself as commandant. Ye do not understand. 'Tis thus. By despatches just received your Colonel gets his step : he will be one of my two Brigadier Majors, and by the same mail by express command from His Majesty's minister (whom ye would seem to have favourably impressed), I am bidden to apprise ye that the vacant colonelcy is at your disposal at the regulation price. May I take it that ye accept ? And—stay yet a moment"—for Justin was opening his lips. "If your means, or remittances, of which I know nothing, should forbid, or—or deter ye, sir, from accepting the step,

I make it a maitter of pairsonal intercession wi' ye that ye shall pairmet me to advance ye the—the—the—money (there's nae ither word for't). Now, sir ! ”

Justin's hand had fallen to his side when he completed his salute. It mechanically arose again, faltered, and fell. His face was stonily hard and pale with emotion.

“ I have passed ye my word, Sir George, or——”

“ Na, na, man, we ha'e shaken hands upon it ; there can be nae rinnin' back. And noo there's naething left but to touch glasses and drink to the lieutenant-colonel-designate.” He moved to a cupboard in the wall.

The door closed behind his visitor. The Governor heard the sentry present arms. He put away the wine, smiling.

“ There's a man for ye. Gin I had tellt him of his step before getting his word I wad never have got it at all. Heh ! there's ane tribble dune with, but what aboot Logie and my beef ? ”

And now, sirs, was our Major by nature a Master or a Servant ?

CHAPTER VIII

DANGER

THREE weeks had gone by. Major Justin, without intending it, has drifted into the most friendly relations with Mrs. Hollinghurst. Her helplessness and inexperience, which had already twice called for his intervention upon her behalf, still claim his assistance. One might say that she leans upon his judgement; he calls and calls again, and is always welcome, is, indeed, sent for, his advice asked, and, what is rarer, acted upon. The lady improves upon acquaintance; her small affectations, her trifling lapses from perfect good breeding, have ceased to annoy him. She is an agreeable person, he has discovered, somewhat wanting in knowledge of the world, needing the help which he would be a churl to refuse. (Oh, Major Justin!) But, unknown to the lady, it was her motherly attitude towards the motherless girl, her house-mate, that had attracted that girl's guardian.

Major Boyle, meanwhile, after nibbling his nails in enforced detention for a couple of weeks, has found the door of the lady of his too impetuous affections resolutely closed to him. He has written, but his letters are returned to him. He is swearing that his honour is engaged, that he will sit down before this fortress for a year, for two years if necessary; win her, he will. After the mode of his day, he has backed himself in guineas. As for the lot of any man who is so ill-advised as to come between them, it is to be inferred that brief and tragic will be the fate of that man. This is the face the man keeps for his world; inwardly he knows that his bolt is shot, and is forming his plan.

And the regiments are still kept apart, and their officers are as watchfully polite as ever. It is plain that the end is not yet.

It is a Monday morning, the early parades are dismissed, the men to the canteens and grog-shops and to their loafing along the curtain wall, their officers to their taverns and their daily constitutionals in the cooler airs of the Upper Rock.

Colonel Justin takes the zigzag track above the camp of the second battalion of the Highland Regiment (the first holds the King's Bastion). Their pipers, secure in the seclusion of a seldom-trodden lane between blank walls, are practising the regimental quick-step, pacing smartly back and forth the while; the air throbs to the drone. At the ancient Jewish burial-ground above he pauses to glance at the fallow marble slabs with their Hebrew inscriptions laid flat amid the mountain flowers, stays his half minute and moves on, upward and still upward, until the narrow track crosses the spine of the sierra and dips down again to a secluded nook which he has discovered on the eastern face, known as Mediterranean Battery. The place is as remote as the crow's-nest of a seventy-four; the unmolested wild life of it, half tame; a small blue thrush sits and sings there by the hour, perched upon the muzzle of a gun. Eagles pass and repass between it and the wrinkled, crawling blue of the distant sea. He enjoys the solitude. There he seats himself, takes out his book, opens it, lays it face downward upon the parapet, and sets himself to think.

This woman who has come into his life in the last two months has apparently come to stay.

Unannounced, unintroduced, this sweet stranger had slipped in, a tiresome intruder at the first, with her pettinesses, her chat on shipboard; he had left her largely to the companionship of the other, until the man's coarseness stood self-revealed, and in sheer compassion the Englishman had interposed for the woman's good. "The fellow is amusing himself at her expense; this voyage over, 'tis a thousand to one if he will so much as cross the street to address a word to her, whilst she—in another day of this sort of thing—may find her affections hopelessly engaged. I'll go as far as to offer myself as a foil." He could smile now at the coxcombical attitude he had struck. A foil! It had got beyond that, both towards the man and the woman: buttons were off.

And it had all come about so naturally, so silently, so inadvertently: for he had his scheme of life at his fingers' ends, cut and dried. He had not intended to marry. After that early disappointment, of which we know something, Justin had put woman out of his life and had determined to live for his profession. His trusteeship, an interlude and intrusion, was still but imperfectly concluded: Susan was not out of danger, must be watched over, and protected from her legal husband; but his King, his Commander-in-Chief, and his regiment had claims upon all that was left of him. Love must not deflect him from his duty.

But apparently it was to be. Whether he loved this lady or no (and upon this point he was not so well assured as he

could have wished to be), 'twas plain that she loved him. The knowledge of this had come to him with a shock, there was no doubt of it, and the appeal of a woman's love is to most men irresistible : it was to Justin. What was his right course ? As a man of honour, now ? Was there a retreat open to him ? And again, did he desire to retreat ?

To these questions he had found no satisfactory answers, albeit he had come to this little-frequented spot for a week past, morning by morning, to think them out.

Meanwhile, how were things going upon the other side of the hedge ? In that old Spanish house in Prince Frederic Street, barred like a jail, as is due to a dwelling which has seen three of the fourteen sieges which the Rock has sustained, the ladies are discussing the matter, as they have discussed it daily for weeks.

The little dark room is littered with reels and bobbins, paper patterns and pieces of material, for Mrs. Hollinghurst, who is clever with her fingers, is repaying her hostess's hospitality with a wonderful new robe, a marvellous creation, which is to take the Alameda by storm this very night.

"I shall look monstrous handsome, I profess, my dear ! How the Colonel's ladies will quizz, how the men will stare !" laughs Mrs. Lamb in high good-humour, rustling and tip-toeing before her glass like a peacock in his pride. "And, well, my dear, to come back to what I was saying, I do say that I regard ye as a most fortunate woman. If there is an eel in your bag of snakes, *if*—I say——"

"I have my hand upon him ? Thank ye, my dear, but isn't that not very pretty comparison usually used of us ? . . . And ye really think—— ?"

"That the Major—the Colonel, I would say—is a gentleman. Yes. I have watched him with ye, and I have made inquiries (my woman has friends at the other end of the town) ; he is well liked in his regiment, kind and merciful to his men ; he has a heart, my dear, which is more than can be said of all of his sex, I do assure ye. I have not lived in a garrison town these three years with my eyes shut, and the things I have seen, and what the unfortunate privates must put up with, you would never credit. But he has a heart.

"Yes, ye are lucky. There are women *and* women : ye are not built to stand alone." Mrs. Hollinghurst pouted. "And since 'tis your destiny to marry again, why, the sooner the better, for here 'tis wasps to honey, and some of the creatures have stings, my dear. I profess I have hardly yet got back my natural sleep after that night adventure. If no one had come up ! If the Governor had *not* appeared just

when he did, the gentlemen would certainly have come to blows about ye, and then——”

“I know, I know,” mourned Mrs. Hollinghurst ruefully: “a woman’s name is easily blown upon. We need all the protection——”

“La, my dear, ye were offered too much of it on that occasion.”

“Mrs. Lamb,” cried the other, laying down her needle, “if I did not know ye for a lady of the nicest mind, I should have been tempted to think—I will thank ye never to use that word in that connection in my hearing again.”

Mrs. Lamb whirled around the tiny work-table and folded the angry little woman to her bosom. “Forgive me, my dear. I am the greatest tease in the world, but there is no harm in me. ’Tis just a spark of envy, my dear, no more, to see ye so happy, and him such a fine creature. And to think what your fate might have been with that wretch, that adventurer; yes, the word is writ plain all over the man.”

The ladies kissed and were reconciled, work went on, needles flashed, fullness was taken in, pleatings and insertions, gathers and gores were dealt with, and ever the name and the good points of Colonel Wade Justin appeared and reappeared as a sort of permanent background to their thoughts.

And the Colonel thinks and thinks and comes to no conclusion: his lips move pleasantly at times, half-consciously forming a name, and are smilingly called to order. The man is feeling astonishingly well, younger, lighter-hearted, stronger, and more himself than he has felt for years. The worn, relapsing mental cast of middle-age, which, however resolutely thrust off, had been growing upon him of late, was gone. Things were going well with him. This belated fortune had come with a rush. The overdue tides of success, strangers to his life, were at flood. His quest had prospered out of all reason: a couple of delightful young people had been added to his circle, nay, to his family. Incidentally—and this, too, was gratifying—he seemed to have won, somehow, the goodwill of his General; and had been most surprisingly singled out for promotion by the favour of his Sovereign. And—and—he paused, hesitating to formulate the last and sweetest success which seemed in store for him.

He sate so still that the small blue thrush sang near him unaffrighted, and as he sat, the mountain silences and the lofty beauty of the view unconsciously stimulated his imagination. He played with his happiness as a child with some delightful new toy, but the witchery of nature was a-work and

moving within him ; his brain began to teem with imagery, his lips to move, inspired by the scene which he had passed without remark upon his way to the place.

“ For there, half-hid among the flowering weed,
Lie yellowing tablets, facing the south-west ”

(Nay, it should go otherwise ; like this, say)—

“ See, over-flourished by incroaching weed,
These yellowing marbles front the alien west,
Graven with characters which few may read
(As if proud reticence became them best),
Where a few wandering sons of Israel’s seed,
Weary with clinging to a worn-out creed,
Have lain them down amid the flowers to rest.
And over them the partridge leads her brood,
The chequered lizard comes to take the sun—”

The thread snapped, an intrusive touch from without intervening. The small blue thrush had ceased singing. An eagle was passing silently below ; the dreamer’s mind came home to him ; he marked the big bird follow the curvatures of the cliff face, almost touching them with the ragged, open wing-tips extended so stiffly. The incident changed the colour of his thoughts, but not for long, the undersong of his happiness was running too strongly within him, too insistently, albeit he listened to it with but half his mind, nor sought to analyse its theme, and presently his lips again began to move in metre :

“ Dappled with tender amethyst it lay
Where the light pinions of the wind went by,
Yet was the crystal dome of region sky
Aloft no bluer than that famous bay.
And, covering with green its gashes grey,
The Warder Rock between them towered high.
‘ The brotherhood of heroes,’ musèd I
(The spot seemed worthy of the noblest clay),
Ever was careless in its choice of graves.
Such usage as their right, these turrets claim,
Grim border towers refusing fealty
Whether to storming clouds or sapping waves,
Yet craving human fellowship, questioning why
No man hath planted here the flower of his name.”

The rhapsodist came back to earth, and to himself with a little gasp, looked about him shyly, smote his hands together and laughed. “ What in the world ails me ? I have not done such a thing for—for—for twenty years ! ”

A step upon the path above aroused him ; he glanced up

in some surprise, his meditations here never having been interrupted hitherto. That the stranger had business with himself did not cross his mind ; he would probably be some adventurous midddy from the squadron exploring the Rock, who would be properly chagrined at finding himself in a *cul-de-sac*, for the zigzags which conduct to the battery stop there, nor has human foot yet reached or left the place by another road. This must needs be a stranger, for the work was an engineer's *tour de force*, never manned, seldom inspected, being useless from a military point of view.

Nearer came the footfalls. Justin raised his eyes ; there, in the gut of the approach, between the parapet and the door of the case-mate, stood Major Boyle ; and from the sombre satisfaction upon his visitor's face, Justin knew that this was no unpremeditated meeting, and recognised that his own position was critical.

As we have already seen, the Englishman had a gift of opportune silence. He left it to his visitor to explain his errand.

The Irishman was carrying a small parcel wrapped in a handkerchief ; this he placed carefully upon the breach of a gun and stood for a moment as if gauging the capabilities of a place which he saw for the first time for a purpose of his own. Like other visitors to the Mediterranean Battery, he was surprised by its extreme smallness and the absence of other means of access. He must leave it by the same road by which he had come. The discovery displeased him, for it disconcerted one part, and that an important part, of his plan. For the Major had a plan. He had come to his farthest ; Mrs. Hollinghurst, he perceived plainly, was not for him ; his wagers and boasts were but blinds to cover a larger scheme than a hopeless suit. During his weeks of arrest he had promised himself, as we know, full and adequate revenge upon Justin, but his rival had now got his step, and, apart from the Governor's injunction, discipline forbade sending a cartel to a man of superior rank. Nor if, by some unimaginable chance, a hostile meeting could have been agreed to, arranged, and brought off, would it have been possible to have kept it from the Governor's knowledge, or to have escaped condign punishment ?

Yet, satisfaction Boyle must have, *and before he left*—for the man had found his position intolerable, and had made up his mind to offer his sword and topographical knowledge to the besiegers. He would fight (kill) Colonel Justin first, then effect his escape. Characteristically, he had made no definite arrangements, much depended upon where and how he met his enemy. In a word, he backed his luck. The

thing had been done a hundred times by privates ; why not by himself ? He could climb and swim ; the back of the Rock, he thought, was always possible. A path would, of course, have been preferable, but he must risk it ; here, at any rate, was his man.

He spoke.

" Ye know what I have come about ? "

" Not in the least. "

" I tell ye ye do : don't lie to me, sir ! " He tapped the parcel, from which he was removing the wrapping ; it was a pistol-case : Justin had seen its like before ; he possessed one of the sort. The insult he allowed to pass : words were wind, but when it came to action he would give away no point.

" Well ? " snarled Boyle, but eliciting no answer, went on, " I have come to fight ye. We will settle the matter between us here and now. "

" There is no matter between us, nor ever has been. But if there were, you are premature ; where is your friend ? "

" Ye are a mighty stickler for regularity—— "

" I prefer things done according to the usage of gentlemen. Say, for the sake of argument, I fight you here without seconds —(I shall not)—but say I do, and kill ye, what explanation have I to offer ? We have nothing between us. More than that, we have been warned by the Governor himself. I thank ye ; no, sir. "

" If an excuse for fighting is all ye want—— "

" I desire none. "

" I'm inclined to believe ye ! But *if* an excuse is your cry, ye shall not be crying long. Mrs. Hollinghurst—— "

" I must decline to discuss the lady—or any lady, with you. "

" Me own view to a T, sir : I did not come here to discuss, but to fight. As for the explanations ye mintioned, do not fash yer thumb with thim : ye'll be called upon for none, nor for annything ilse when I've finished with ye, " said Boyle, with a confidence at once ferocious and superb.

" Take yer weapon, sir ; here is yer choice, they are a pair, loaded by mysilf in the presence of reputable witnusses : my mess is in this, ye will onderstand. " The man was advancing upon Justin with a pistol in each hand held by the barrel.

" I decline to touch your arms : your demand is utterly irregular and unwarranted, " replied the Englishman, his hands behind him. He had risen, as was natural, but his attitude betrayed no fear, his eye had narrowed, but was steady, his voice was under control ; but these signs of self-mastery were hidden from an insolent foe whose patience was at an end.

Laying down the pistol which he had been holding in his right upon the parapet of the battery, Boyle advanced upon his enemy with raised hand. "There ar're hor'sus and hor'sus—the blood hor'rse that just asks ye to give him his head at a fince, and the half-bred cur which must be flogged up to his lep. It seems to me, sir, that ye ar're not a natural lepper, and I'll just be cuffing ye into a shuitable frame of mind to take the bohireen."

As he spoke he struck—his open hand descended sharply ; but inexplicably to himself, missed Justin's cheek ; the smaller man, giving ground a few inches, permitted his assailant's hand to brush the breast of his frock, and following it in with a swift spring, instantly closed. What happened next the amazed aggressor could not precisely recall, nor ever understood. He found his right hand caught, turned under, and held in an absolutely novel grip (familiar enough to our modern police) ; he discovered his enemy in possession ; his bulk and reach were of no service to him. Justin, the small, quiet, despised man, whom he had held so cheaply, had pinioned him, and was holding on, was at his side, yet half behind him, wholly beyond his reach ; further, he was conscious of a knee pressing beneath his own, swaying, rocking him as it willed, and upon a system, whilst he——! *Hell!* Suddenly the man saw scarlet, the loaded weapon in his left had a meaning (a moment before he had thought of dropping it, to get, if he might, some use from the fist) ; he shifted his grasp, found the trigger, it fell, Justin's cap rose, and simultaneously Boyle found himself upon his back across the breach of a gun, trussed and helpless. Justin, who had thrown him and was holding him down, was getting his breath ; presently he spoke.

"I am sorry you fired ; that came near to murder."

The man who had used the pistol could see as much by this time, and had nothing to urge. The future opened before his eyes and appalled his imagination. He struggled with a paroxysm of despairing passion that stirred the gun-carriage upon its slides, but availed him nothing. The little man's wrists held, and his own enormous limbs were so disposed as to be useless to him.

"If you do that again, I shall be obliged to put your shoulder out," warned Justin ; and the hobbled giant knew that the threat was not an idle one : his right shoulder was as nearly as possible dislocated already.

"How long are ye going to keep me here ? " he gasped at the end of an interminable ten minutes.

"I do not know. . . . Until somebody comes."

Boyle ground his teeth. "Nobody ever does come to this cursud place. They tell me it is never visitud by rounds."

"Pardon me ; it is visited by the Garrison Artillery Inspector once a week. He was here this morning."

"And—you—mean—to say——" panted the captive thickly, for his position had grown extremely uncomfortable, "that—you—will keep me *here*—like this—until he comes again ? I will be a did man in a few hours."

"I do not know. . . . I cannot tell. . . . What I do know is that I can't trust ye. . . . Naturally I am hoping that we shall be found sooner ; but, for myself, I prefer the risk of waiting to turning ye loose."

Another forty minutes passed, each one of them an hour ; the captive's face was purple, his breath was taken in jerks, his stock was choking him.

"Damn—ye,—I—am—dying !" His appearance lent probability to the assertion. The captor's bare head was throbbing beneath the strengthening sunbeams.

"*Can* I trust ye ?" he asked at length.

"By—God—yes ! . . . Yes,—by—the Mother of God !" croaked the throttled wretch.

The grip relaxed, but the man needed help to regain his feet : nor could he keep them. Reeling back, he seated himself heavily upon the carriage of the gun, staring dully, taking thick, short breaths. The misused pistol lay upon the ground as it had fallen, some yards away ; its fellow, still loaded, upon the parapet within reach of his hand.

Justin glanced around him in search of his cap. It was nowhere to be seen, yet a cap he must have.

So Monday passed. Nothing happened to stir the deadly monotony of the besieged. A xebec, which had cleared from Tetuan with cattle for the forces before the embargo, was captured off the point by a Spanish gunboat. Beef rose threepence per pound. The Catalan Bay fishermen refused to put to sea unless protected by the launches of the squadron, but the commodore, refitting for his return voyage, professed himself unable to spare the men.

CHAPTER IX

MISSING

TUESDAY dawned, another brilliant day ; by noon a rumour had run the length of the Rock ; it was known for a certainty at the Land Port, for the sentries there had been questioned ; 'twas known at the Water Port, where the crews of the guard-boats had been interrogated ; it was the talk of the South Port and the Ragged Staff and the Mole, of the Highlanders in the casemates of the King's Bastion, and of every battery along the curtain. It was buzzed in each camp, barrack, and quarters, from Europa Point to the new galleries along the North Front, that Colonel Justin of the 12th Foot was missing.

To most of those who heard the news the man was but a name, albeit to gentlemen bearing His Majesty's commission it was a name that had begun to sound well. To the officers of his regiment the missing man was already a valued and popular commandant, and the tidings were received with incredulous concern.

In the little house in Prince Frederic Street there were tears.

But among the Hardenbergs was the secret, dark glee of men who have scored at last—not wholly, perhaps, as they would have ordered the matter, not precisely according to rule, maybe, but who have scored.

Their C.O., fat, old, and incompetent, knew nothing and said as much as he knew. Of their two majors, one had been drunk for twenty-four hours, and was, for the moment, the most popular man in the regiment ; but, for the rest, from the officers' mess down to the drums, the Hardenbergs were as one man in support of their thesis—Colonel Justin had deserted.

Which was absurd.

The rumour reached Governor Sir George Eliott at the Convent, studying the morning states of the corps under his command. A sudden and strict man was Governor Eliott ;

he put two and two together and pounced promptly. Major Boyle of the Hardenbergs was taken from his bed and placed under close arrest in the cells beneath the Court House ; his quarters were sealed up and double sentries posted at the door.

Search of the strictest began high and low ; interrogations also ; testimony trickled in.

So Tuesday's sun rode the heavens, baked the waterless ledges of the Eastern Face, searched the prickly terraces of the western slope, saw what he saw, and sunk to his bed seaward. And still Mrs. Hollinghurst's tears fell, and still no tidings of lost Colonel Justin.

Wednesday was another dazzling blue day. Men searched still, but with less enthusiasm. As the heat grew, the sentries felt faint upon their beats. All nature slept under it, save, as the lookout at the Signal Station noticed, the eagles of the Eastern Face, which seemed unusually restless, constantly upon the move.

After morning parade the court-martial met in the Court House ; it was composed of officers of all arms and ranks, drawn from every corps save the two regiments concerned.

Lieut-Gen. Boyd was President ; under him sate Colonel Godwin of the Artillery ; Lieut.-Col. Cochrane of the 58th Foot ; Colonel Green of H.M. Engineers ; Major Kellett of the 39th Foot ; Major Fancourt of the 56th Foot ; Major Mackay of Lord M'Leod's regiment (H.M. 73rd) ; Major Busch of Reden's Hanoverian regiment, and Major de Sélincourt of De la Motte's Hanoverian regiment ; nine in all, for the gravity of the occasion called for a general court-martial.

The prisoner, no longer drunk, but as fresh as a rose (the man had a marvellous constitution and a high spirit), was brought into court accompanied by his "friend" (a time-honoured fiction for a brother officer learned in the law of courts-martial).

Being charged with causing the death of the missing man, he repelled the charge with indignation. The President recorded a plea of "Not Guilty." In the pause which followed and whilst the quill was yet scratching, the Friend of the accused arose, demanding immediate acquittal upon the ground that there was not a tittle of testimony connecting the prisoner with the crime. Crime ! he scouted the idea. Why crime ? He submitted that there was no proof of the death of Colonel Justin. But, supposing that he were dead, there was not the shadow of a shade of reason to lay his death at the door of the accused.

He would have continued, but the Court overruled the plea. There was evidence.

Men watching intently for signs saw the prisoner's eyelid flicker.

Testimony tending to show the existence of previous ill-will was admitted. (The ways of courts-martial are very wonderful.) The Governor's orderly deposed to watching a scuffle upon a flight of steps between the accused and the missing officer. "There was others present," added the witness, but was stopped by the Court. "Name no names, my man, if you please!" Most of the judges knew the story: to those who did not it was communicated in whispers behind the hands of the initiated. Mrs. Hollinghurst should be kept out of this, if possible. The fortnight's arrest was noted in connection with the alleged scuffle, which the prisoner indeed did not deny. Scuffle there had been none, but the only rebutting evidence would have been that of the women, uncertain at all times, dangerous at this; he *had* fingered his sword-hilt. No, he did not sufficiently believe in his danger to lose caste by dragging a woman into the matter, whom the Court, gentlemen all, desired to spare.

Ensign Chisholm of Lord M'Leod's regiment swore to having seen Colonel Justin, whom he knew well, pass the Highlanders' camp on the Monday morning, had followed him with his eye, and had seen him cross the ridge as if making for the Mediterranean Battery. He was carrying a book. He had not seen him return.

"That last is not evidence," remarked the prisoner's Friend. "Neither did any of the rest of us see him return; but he may very well have returned when we were not looking."

Chisholm had watched the accused take the same path twenty minutes later. He was carrying a parcel beneath his arm wrapped in a bandana similar to the one produced. Had seen him come down the mountain carrying the same parcel, it might have been an hour later. He went up fast, he came down slowly, and rested twice.

Had he noticed anything unusual about the manner or appearance of the accused? He had observed that he was holding, or wearing, a white cloth or *hankey* over his chin. ("I do not possess such an article," interjected Boyle.)

Hearing on the previous day (Tuesday) that Colonel Justin was being sought for, he, Chisholm, had gone up to the ridge to "spy." (This use of the word was new to most of the Court, but Major Mackay interpreted.) Subsequently Chisholm had visited the Mediterranean Battery: had found there the book produced (*Connop on Field Fortification*, bearing the name of the missing man on the fly-leaf). Asked if he noticed anything unusual in the battery, he replied that

he had found the soil between the guns disturbed as if by a struggle.

"Pure assumption! I must protest!" interposed the Friend.

Chisholm flashed a glance at the interrupter. "There wass the mair'rks o' twa disteenct boot-heels; a sma' ane, and a lairger."

There was a buzz of subdued whispering in Court. Elder men remarked the quiet, gawky Scottish lad as a fellow with an eye, also with a head, and thought he might go far.

Anything more? It appeared that Chisholm was only at the beginning of his discoveries. "'Twixt the guns, and at the fut o' the pairapet, I fand this, sir." He handed up a button embossed with the crown and regimental number of the prisoner's late regiment, the 41st. "And against the door o' the casement this" (a wad of paper, slightly singed).

The ruddy cheek of the accused perceptibly paled; the net seemed closing around him in most uncomfortable sort. He regretted too late the line of defence. There was no cross-examination.

"Ensign Chisholm," said the President, "the Court commends ye for your prudence. Ye have given your evidence creditably."

These pieces of testimony were putting a different complexion upon the case, as any one could see. With this button in view the judges sent for the prisoner's kit, and meanwhile adjourned for luncheon.

Outside the building Chisholm's arm was touched by his friend Travis. "Chizzy, ye've a better head than I for a mountain; can ye put your hand upon a good dependable rope? I, too, have made a discovery."

The Court reassembled. The prisoner's kit included a uniform frock of the 41st regiment wanting one button. The button found by Ensign Chisholm matched those upon the garment in every respect.

The wad now came in for scrutiny at the hands of experts. It fitted the bore of the prisoner's pistols.

"It would fit fifty pistols, yours, mine, anybody's!" interjected the Friend. "The thing may well have been lying where it was found for months, for years."

The Major of Lord M'Leod's Highlanders was unrolling the wad, was straightening and patting the paper out.

"It canna weel ha' bin lying there a *wik*, ma dear sir; it is a *nottis* o' some soort; ha! this is eevidence; General, I mak' it o'er to yersel'!" he handed to the President a crumpled and singed fragment of a play-bill, in German, the cast of

certain private theatricals which had beguiled the enforced seclusion of the Hardenbergs within the past fortnight. Again that soft buzz of irrepressible whispers and the escaping of pent breaths filled the court.

What of the pistols ? One only of the pair was loaded, its fellow seemed to have been recently discharged, for the grime of powder was discernible in pan and barrel. To have left such a weapon uncleared for more than a day was a dereliction to shake the head over ; it called for explanation in itself. For the pistols were worth a day's journey to handle, and were passed reverently around the Court from the President to the junior Major ; and whoever touched them did so with the tenderness of an expert in an age when a man's life and honour might depend upon the quality of his personal weapon. The barrels bore the mark of Nicholas Biz of Madrid and were spirally twisted : the President judged them to be undoubted Spanish iron, forged from old mule-shoes. The locks were London-made, Joe Manton's latest action, fitted with platinum touch-holes and with pans plated with gold to prevent corrosion. No better work was turned out by the Versailles gunsmiths, said the President ; the pair, he whispered, was worth anything from £400 to £500. But neither the blue gloss of the barrels, nor the perfect balance, nor the delicately light pull aroused such interest as the half-dozen or so of ivory insets, studding the dark walnut butts, each with its initials and date, grim mementoes of the slain.

The examination of the weapons consumed not less than five minutes ; strictly speaking, there was very little about them that was admissible evidence, but the judges were practical persons in their profession rather than lawyers, and knew that a man does not carry such a parcel as this when out for a morning's walk *inside* the British lines without reason. The marks of recent use, the wad too, pointed in but one direction ; but the pistols themselves, and especially the ivory insets, weighted the scale against the accused.

He saw that the thing was going against him. The net was tightening ; the fish grew uneasy. " Ye had better leave yourself in the hands of your Friend, sir, and reserve your defence," counselled the President in reply to some intemperate remark.

" And that, I think, General, is the case for the Crown," said the officer in charge of what we may call the prosecution.

The prisoner's Friend sorted his notes, cleared his throat and was rising, when a commotion at the door of the Court House made him turn his head. The day was hot. The place was crowded to suffocation, but persons outside were urgently demanding admission and would take no denial.

"Aw'm a wutness, I tell ye : tak' ma name till the Pree-sident o' this Coort, o' twull be the waur for ye !"

"If that be Ensign Chisholm, admit him," sounded the voice of authority, and two youngsters, Chisholm of the 73rd, and Travis of the 12th, were passed with difficulty to the table. The uniforms of both were in disorder; they were heated, and weighted with the gravity of the evidence they had come in haste to offer. A wide-crowned, peaked cap, such as was worn at the time by officers in undress, was placed in the hands of the President; it was pierced with two bullet-holes. Eyes rounded, the packed room held breath to hear the better.

"From a bush *below* the Mediterranean Battery?" echoed the President incredulously.

"Fafty-seven fit, General; wull it please ye to mee-sure the tow?"

"But 'tis admittedly inaccessible. How got ye there?"

"I let him down on a rope, General; belayed it around the chase of a gun," corroborated Lieutenant Travis, rising with hand to brow.

"Swear that gentleman too," said the President. "This grows serious indeed."

"His name is on the lining," observed an officer to whom the cap had been handed.

"This rammer will just pass the holes," remarked another.

"Are there any marks of blood or brains?" asked the Friend, rising after a hurried colloquy with his client.

There were neither; but the point was ignored, the evidence being sufficiently conclusive as it stood.

The defence was a fiasco. The prisoner's Friend was visibly disconcerted. In the face of the evidence it was needful to change front somewhat, to admit that his man had visited the battery (had not merely gone to the top "for the view" as previously suggested). That he had gone armed was also admitted, "to practise at a mark," the Court was assured. That the men had met within the narrow limits of that lonely work was conceded, and that the cap of the missing man had been pierced by a bullet from the pistol of the accused.

"But," cried the prisoner, putting his Friend aside, and addressing the Court with passionate energy, "I assure ye, gentlemen all, 'twas the mee-rust accident, the slipping of a hair-trigger, no more, and sorra wan morsel of har'm done. I lift the Meejor in perfuct health, and indade, I have no reason at all to suppose him in worse at this moment. And this I swear upon the true faith of a Christian."

They heard him out to the last word that he could urge, heard him with the grim patience of judges whose minds are

made up. How ill did this belated candour accord with his counsel's opening statement !

The removal of the prisoner in custody and the clearing of the court were matters of form. In less than fifteen minutes the room was filled again. All eyes were riveted upon the table whereon lay the sword of the accused, no longer placed athwart the green cloth in a position of non-committal, but with its hilt now to the seat of the President and its point directed to the dock.

"Prisoner," said General Boyd, in the short, choppy tones of a man doing in public a thing which he is unused to do, and which he hates, "Prisoner—Cornelius Boyle—this Court finds you guilty of the wilful and premeditated murder of Lieutenant-Colonel Wade Justin. The sentence is death. You will be taken——"

"But the man is *aloive* !" shouted the condemned man, leaping to his feet with a strident laugh.

"Silence, sir. We have taken into consideration the fact that the body of your unfortunate victim has not been found. We are going to extend to you a most unusual consideration. The execution of the sentence will be postponed for one week, dating from the hour at which the deceased was last seen alive. If he can be produced in good health before Monday next at nine in the forenoon this affair will assume another complexion. Remove the prisoner."

"Gintlemen, I thank ye ! I'm not a did man yet ; nor is Justin," said the condemned man, saluting, and turned left-half-face to precede his guard.

"A brave fellow, but a bad man," growled the President, a sentiment in which every member of the Court concurred.

So Wednesday's sun sloped towards the west ; cool blue shadows gathered upon the aching yellow stone of the Eastern Face, broadening, blackening ; then night fell. There would be four more days.

Thursday broke cool and dewy with a thin haze over the Straits. Men foretold a broiling day later on, but the weather suddenly grew thick and some rain fell, a Levanter with heavy wet whilst it lasted, or this story had never been written.

Under cover of the downfall a Catalan Bay craft attempted to get round with a load of fresh-caught fish, was overhauled by the same Spanish galley, and carried a prize to Algeçiras under the eyes of a British squadron careening to clean ship.

Boyle in his condemned cell read a novel and yawned. The thing was too damnably absurd. Appeal to the Governor ? Not he ! He had a crow to pick with Sir George already, and would not for the world spoil sport. This should be the talk of London yet, and the laugh was going to be his. Justin

would be found before the day was out. "Mark me, sir! the fellow will come home to-day, alive and *mad*! 'Tis the frenzy of a runaway lunatic; a touch of sun; no more."

His mess sent him presents of wine and made dishes; his visitors reported him in the highest of spirits. Some shook their heads; 'twas plain that the man did not dare to face the position.

It was remembered afterwards that the sergeant on duty at the Signal Station had been diverted this day by the antics of a party of monkeys, which, after much reconnoitring and chattering upon the rugged cliff beneath the Mediterranean Battery, trooped away in a body from that part of their haunt.

Thursday night set in early with a drizzle of fine rain falling. There was no news of lost Colonel Justin.

CHAPTER X

SUSPENSE

LONG before sunrise on the Thursday Mrs. Lamb's woman Painter was up and dusting her mistress's little morning room. Before sunrise, I have said; for it would be hours before the sun, already white and softly warm upon the Eastern Face, would climb the mountain and peep down into dark, narrow Prince Frederic Street and the *patio* of the little Spanish house.

It was still dusk in the small back room. Mrs. Lamb, a thrifty housewife, used up her candle-ends personally; Painter, her maid-of-all-work (the term "general" is modern, and would have involved misunderstanding in a garrison town)—Painter, I say, retired and rose in the dark and did early chores such as these by sense of touch. She was working her way along the mantelshelf, grumbling softly to herself, her back to the door which she did not see opening slowly.

"Good-morning to ye, Mrs. Painter."

The woman started as if she had heard a spirit; there stood her mistress's elder guest, red-eyed and pathetically weary after a sleepless night, but dressed for walking.

"Y-yes, 'm! Lord, how ye made me jump!" panted Painter.

"I am sorry to have startled ye, Painter; I wanted—I wondered if ye could do a little thing for me. Your mistress is still sleeping?"

"Bless ye, yes, ma'am. She do sleep like a top. Hear her!"

Thus directed, the ears of Mrs. Hollinghurst recognised soft rhythmical nasal vibrations purring down through the boards overhead.

"Will Mrs. Lamb be needing ye for half an hour, d'ye think?"

"Lor' bless ye, no, ma'am. She'll not turn upon her side

until I takes her in her cup o' tay and draws the shutter-bolt. 'Tis a gift she've got, a perfect gift! What can I do for ye, ma'am?"

"I—I have eaten but poorly these last two days, Painter."

"Y'ave indeed, ma'am; ye have picked no more than a cage-bird. Is there any little one thing ye could fancy?"

"I was thinking of fish, Painter; I confess I am partial to fish. If——"

"Ah, there ye beat me, ma'am. Our regular man, Célestin, has not called for days, and doubtless ye know why?"

It appeared that Mrs. Hollinghurst knew all about the Spanish galley and the stoppage of the supplies of wrasse and rock cod.

"But I fancied, Painter, that if we got early to the market there was just a chance——"

"So there be, ma'am, and I'll run along myself. No need for ye to set foot out of door at this time o' the morning."

But this was no part of Mrs. Hollinghurst's plan, and the serving-woman presently found herself escorting her mistress's guest through the empty streets towards the Water Port, a large and tolerant pity in her wondering bosom.

The two had not reached the first corner when they caught the patter of swift, light feet behind them, and Sue was of their party. "I overheard—I guessed—I know! You will let me join you, Julia dear?"

Célestin Mistral had been born a subject of The Most Catholic King, but his native language was not Spanish, nor was he a Spaniard. Provençal was the speech he had learned at his mother's knee; he was a slighter, more wiry, finer type than the Iberian, for he was a Catalan, the best boatman of the little colony of his countrymen on the Eastern Face of Gibraltar.

Seeing the women approach he removed the cigar he was smoking, doffed his red woollen *beret* and arose, asking their pleasure in passable English.

"Have ye no fish?" began the maid, but the man swept his hands expressively in the direction of his empty stall and shrugged lean square shoulders. No need for words.

"I know—I know," broke in the elder lady, coming forward (she had been standing half behind her companion, her hood about her cheeks; now she parted its folds with both hands and looked the bronzed fisherman full in the face as though she would assure herself of his capacity before opening her business). "It is not a question of fish to-day, my man. Where is your boat?"

"Moored at the Water Port, ma-dam: but——"

"But I want you to put to sea for me——"

"A hard matter, ma-dam, for there is no wind."

"You can row?"

"So can those others, ma-dam, eight on a side, sweeps, and a swivel-gun forward. Ma-dam will understand that I do not desire to die in the chain-gang at Algeçiras. And for why, ma-dam, if it is not a question of fish?"

"Man, have you not heard of this murder? of the King's officer who was killed on Monday and thrown over the cliff (so they say), at the little battery at the top of the Rock at the other end?" The lady's voice had a sweet tremor in it—she was fighting an impulse to break down; the man, a gentleman, straightened himself, stood to attention in the presence of grief, and passion, and beauty, dropped the cigar with which he had been comforting an empty stomach, and waited.

"The—the body has not been found, my man. He, Colonel Justin, was a friend of mine. I want—I should like—I do not yet believe—but, if you could recover the body I would reward you. Yes, I know all about this *guarda costa*, but a sailor must always run his risks; is not that so? And they say you are the best boatman on the Rock. Is not that so, too? Well, I will give you twenty dollars now, just to show you that I am in earnest, and two hundred more when you bring in the body"—a sob. "But I do not believe that my friend is dead"—her voice broke into a pitiful whimper—"a thousand for him alive!" She covered her face and wept softly within her hood, her body shaking with the weakness of grief and fasting. The woman beside her watched for a fall. Sue flung an arm about her, but there was to be no fainting to-day; she was too desperately set upon her quest, and this sailorman had not yet replied.

He hesitated, shrugging those lean shoulders again, weighing the bag of dollars tentatively in his hand, for he had by no means determined to accept them. The risk was real and great, far greater than the ladies realised. Mistral knew what sort of mercy a Catalan prisoner of war might expect from his Spanish captors, and shrunk from the prospect of being penned at night in a stifling barracoon and beaten all day in the trenches, chained to his spade between Jews, Moors, and the worst characters of the camp. And for twenty dollars! As for the larger sums mentioned, he hardly took them into consideration: the recovery of the body was an off-chance; whilst to bring again a living man after all these days, a man who had been shot and flung over a cliff, too—such would be a miracle. All things are possible to the good God, but He does not see fit in these last days to work the miracle, not even for true Christians; and these, with all their bounty, were heretics. No.

When a man has reached this point twenty dollars are neither here nor there. Célestin Mistral, empty stomach and all, would play for safety, and, bowing sedately and low, returned the money. "There was no wind, nor sign of wind. His boat was heavy; he must have a second hand in her, and he knew of none who would join in such an adventure. No."

Very sadly and reluctantly the money was retaken, and the women went. Sue lingered, turning upon the man her sad, imploring, magnificent eyes. "Man, if there should be a wind"—she loosened a golden brooch from her throat, the most valuable jewel which she possessed; she had snatched it, the first thing that came to her hand, when she found the others were leaving the house without her—"Man, if a wind should spring up, will you try? Oh, will ye just try? He, the dear Colonel, is alive, we know it, we feel it here": her little hand pressed her heart, her loosened dress fell open, the brown southerner had a momentary glimpse of a throat and bosom of a wonderful whiteness, the glory of womanhood. His eyes snapped, he fell upon one knee, and catching the hand that held the brooch, kissed it as he would have kissed some authentic relic.

"Ma-dam, by the grace of God I will bring the gen-tel-man to you alive." He shook a lean, impressive forefinger at her in token of his conviction.

The jewel shone in the brown paw he extended. The lady turned to go. "Bless you! Oh, God bless you!"

But Thursday warmed to fiery noon, and cooled slowly off as the sun weakened. And the calm held; the vanes boxed the compass, sails in harbour hung slack from motionless yards. Célestin bethought him of the promised dollars; none knew the set of the currents around Europa Point so well as he, or where a body that had plunged deep and risen slowly might be found after five days' drifting, but he bethought him likewise of that armed galley, and waited for a wind.

Friday passed slowly in the little Spanish house in Prince Frederic Street. Mrs. Hollinghurst forced herself to labour at her friend's dress, but her heart was no longer in it, she was often slipping off to her room; the others could hear the murmur of praying lips; Painter made cup after cup of tea for the poor creature.

"Oh, my dears, it maddens me. How can a body's heart bear it? No, don't speak to me, Susan! I'll not be spoken to, nor looked at. Ye've no heart—girls have none. How should they? Ye don't know how I feel." She flung herself upon the settle, and gave way to a storm of weeping.

Susan set her work down, gathered the weeping woman

into her arms and buried her own face in her friend's hair. Their hot tears mingled.

"What are ye whispering?—*Hope*? There's none. Murdered men don't come back. Your young Chisholm—and what has he to say? Oh, he has writ ye, has he? Well, ye may as well read his rubbish, 'twill pass the time.

Sue read:

" 'Written from the King's Bastion, where we
are quartered, July 31, 1779.

" 'TO MRS. TIGHE, AT MRS. LAMB'S, PRINCE FREDERIC ST.

" 'Honoured Madam,

"I am persuaded ye will pardon these. I have just ane brief Word of Consolation for ye touching our absent Friend. You may recall that I saw baith the two Gentlemen, Colonel Justin and the *Other*, pass me on their way up to the Battery, and that I beheld the *Other* (aforesaid) return by his lane. As I deponed to the Court in my Eevidens, I destinckly saw the *Other* on baith Journeys holding (or wearing) a white Mouchoir to his Mouth. And this is my perfect Belief, though rebutted in Court. This Rebutment gave me to think a wee, and looking later upon the *Other* whilst the Colonel President was delivering Sentence, I saw that the *White Thing* was then upon his Face, but that it covered the Neb, of him and indeed all save the Eyes. Then whilst I looked it was gane. Now, Madam, I was never held to have the Second Sight by any of my ain People, but it is most plain to me that I haf it now, and that the *Other* is a Dead Man. But, as ye will see, *per contra*, our absent Friend can be neither dead nor dying, for his Face was most particularly free when last obsairved by

" 'Your most humble, most devotit, and most obedt. Servant,

" 'JOHN CHISHOLM,

" '*Ensign in the 73rd regiment (Lord M'Leod's).*'

"Now, what think ye of that, my dear Mrs. Hollinghurst?"

"La, child! if the poor Colonel be not dead, in what danger is the other? 'Tis just the rigmarole of a superstitious Highland savage."

"And that it is *not*, and he is *not*!" flashed Susan, springing away from her peevish friend and shaking her skirts briskly, as though vexed with them for their contact with so unreasonable a person.

"Children, do have done," cried Mrs. Lamb, smiling tolerantly upon both.

"And to think of our meek little Susan sparking up in defence of a strange young man!" For Sue had fled. The ladies looked archly upon one another, the sorrowing Hollinghurst through tears which she forgot for a moment. "Why, Julia, she set at ye like a gamecock! What is this? Pray God, this Scots lad be a good heart! He seems it; and the Colonel—I mean Mr. Travis—is fond of him."

The door reopened. Sue slipped shyly in and dropped upon her knees beside the widow. "Mrs. Hollinghurst, Julia, dear, forgive me! I did wrong to fly out at ye, and you so good to poor me. God knows ye've enough to bear without my tempers."

Night came at last, a night of thick, soft, heated darkness, for the moon was at the full, and consequently upon the other side of the Rock until midnight or so. By three in the morning (the Saturday morning) it shone against the half-closed shutter of Mrs. Lamb's chamber, a broad plank of silver lay across the floor.

The good lady slept the sleep of a just woman; her slumber was at its deepest. Something moved outside the door, the latch clicked and rose, somebody was within the room, but the sleeper stirred not: the intruder crept closer, closer, to the dark margin of that shining plank. The sleeper sat up, still asleep. "Who is it?" she asked thickly, automatically, with closed eyes, and would have lain down again; but with a rush something was upon her. Her heart stopped, she drew breath for the shriek, but found that the creature was a warm, live, tender-breasted woman. Julia was weeping in her arms.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Lamb! Oh, I can bear it no longer. He is not dead, I am sure of it!"

"So am I, my dear; why should he be dead, indeed?"

"No, don't put me off with your fibs, you kind heart; I am not a child. *You* think he was killed by that wretch; so did I until a minute ago. Oh, I have passed a night! Sometimes I could have watched that man tortured; oh, I am a cruel thing, my dear—a wicked, cruel thing! Then, again for an hour or two I could forgive him, actually forgive as I hope to be forgiven. But it didn't hold, I slipped back—back. And, just now, I think I dropped off; instantly I heard my dear speaking, no, not calling,—speaking slowly, quietly, with a drag in his voice as a sick man speaks who is dead weary. I was a long way off, you understand, but I pressed through things to reach him, and the voice grew plainer and nearer. '*I will not*,' he was saying, '*I—will—not!*' and again, '*For her sake*,' '*For her sake*,' over and over again. Now, you who are older, what make ye of that? Is he not struggling to live? And for me?"

And Sunday drew on, drew to a close, and no news of lost Colonel Justin.

The condemned man had finished his novel. He did not ask for another. The chaplain had called upon him again, had offered his services, had met with a civil refusal. The man showed astonishing nerve, stuck to his story; blamed, but forgave his legal friend for the tactical error of his defence; pardoned his judges; professed himself sure of the Governor's respite, repeating hardily, if with weakening conviction, his constant formula, "The fellow is as aloive as mesilf, I tell ye!"

On Sunday after sunset gun, his face fell. All day he had been reviewing his past life, a thing he had never done before; he had refought his battles and thoroughly enjoyed the flavour of bygone cakes and ale, and all the ginger that had been hot i' the mouth. But just as that sunset gun boomed a recurring flash of memory had shown him a dim, low-ceiled city room, a smirking woman, a shuffling priest and himself, around an innocent, affrighted girl, faced by a four-square frocked sailor-man who with lifted hand was saying: "This is the word of the Lord unto thee—as thee treats this here young woman, so shall He treat thee in thy hour of need." He had jeered at the warning then; he had never thought of it since; now it cast up at him, and his face fell.

But one more night upon earth was left to him. He summoned his jailor.

"Me frind, I am of the ould faith. Can ye get me a priest?"

The thing was irregular, but was winked at; it had been done before, for there were many Irishmen as well as a corps of Corsicans in the garrison.

Mr. Barrington, the music-master of George Augustus Street, late ('twas whispered) of Douai, was fetched.

"'Tis a black story this, me son. Have ye anny more of the sor'rt? Be kaping nothing back, I adjure ye!"

"'Tis about all, Father. No, I have nothing ilse upon me mind, onless, indade, 'tis a thrifling matter of a wife that I have in Prince Frederic Street."

The confessor's forehead wrinkled; he would have something to say presently, but the facts first.

Out it all came, another evil tale, and the last of many. The listener's steady eye was fixed upon the narrator. At the story of the repudiation before the Governor the priest's mouth hardened, "'Tis the jooce of a time ye'll be having in purgatory for this, ye blay-gyar'rd! H'whell! Did I iver hear such a confission in me loife? I doubt ut. Upon me sowl, ye are unfit to live, and that the Lord has plainly dis-

covered. 'Tis my hooly belief that He is taking ye out of further mischuf. But as ye are sure that ye did not kill the Colonel (ye *ar're* sure ?). H'well thin, we'll see what can be done for yez."

Later it was reported that the prisoner had made a clean breast of it. His mess denied it. He had slept well.

CHAPTER XI

BENEATH THE CLIFFS

SLOWLY passed that Sunday night. Mrs. Lamb subsequently declared that she never closed an eye, a matter upon which we are not called upon to express an opinion, nor to record Painter's. Mrs. Hollinghurst, worn out with a week of horrid anxiety, slept the heavy, dreamless sleep of exhaustion. Yet some sentinel sense was awake within her, for in the gray dawn the jar and lapse of a louvred shutter aroused her with a start. "Wind? Yes, the first for days; but, 'tis too late now; and if it were not, that fisherman has no mate, and is too weak-spirited." She fell a-weeping and was presently asleep again—the utter, collapsed, sodden sleep which saves the brain.

Yes, in the little Spanish house in Prince Frederic Street was the grief of a breaking heart. Hope was dead at last. No one comes back after a week. Her night assurance had vanished with the setting of the moon. Sue had feared for her reason, but again, and yet again, came the rush of tears that brought ease and relieved her wits.

And the shutter rattled at intervals, for the wind breathed on; a bay-tree in the *patio* rustled its leathern leaves, whispering *News! news!* the tiresome stupid thing, when there was no news, nor ever would be again.

Painter brought "tay" to her mistresses' bedsides and mentioned that Mrs. Tighe had gone for a walk, and desired them not to wait breakfast for her.

The morning sun shone upon a dancing sea and baby waves; a light north wind was brushing the dead blue water of the harbour into life: seen from the rock above, the fingers of the breeze played over the face of the bay, now here, now there, swift, capricious, invisible, but, with instant and exquisite effects, the satin surface changed to *moire antique* and

lute-string ; all the hues of a peacock's tail were there for a moment and were gone, replaced by shards of plasma and emerald, sapphire, amethyst, and pale turkis.

The breeze had awaked at dawn and still held. A single boat had dropped down to Europa Point, had rounded, and, keeping well under the cliffs, had lowered sail and was working along inshore below the great sheer precipice beneath Sugarloaf Hill (Pan de Azucar, the Scorpions call it).

There were two people in the boat ; a lean, brown-faced man at the oars, and a smaller figure in the stern-sheets, cloaked and hooded, our Sue, no other, who, at the first whisper of the coming wind, had leapt from her bed and sought the Catalan fisherman at the Water Port. She had found him leaner and hungrier than ever. No one would buy the brooch : the Jews were gone, and to an Englishman a jewel in such hands was a matter of suspicion. Hence she found her man open to reason : such reasons as she had brought with her. Of the three hundred pounds which Furley, on behalf of Friend Hippisley, had left in Sue's hands, the girl had placed all but fifty with her guardian for safety. It was this balance which she offered Mistral for his services.

"But, my lady, I shall need another hand, and where——?"

"Here !—take me. I will go with you. I can steer ; oh, I have steered a boat before, I have steered a brig. Come, let us be going whilst the wind lasts."

Her energy swept away his scruples. Fifty pounds was a very large sum to a man in his position in those days, and, apart from the off-chance of adding to it by the recovery of the floating corpse, fish was making fancy prices ; if he should chance upon the luck of Saint Peter he could place every fin of it. So, having reached the best ground, he pulled out two hundred yards and let down his lines, keeping an eye to the southward the while for that *guarda costa*. Sue sat restless and vaguely disappointed. Some exterior impulse, or native instinct, had driven her to this place of horror ; she had pressed through difficulties to reach it, she had reached it, and having arrived, there was nothing for her to do. Unlike her brother, unlike Chisholm, unlike her friends and house-mates, the girl still silently bore a hope in her bosom, a foolish, unreasonable belief that the Colonel would return to them. It was not a thing to argue about, nor to talk over, so she had said very little ; but there it was, this conviction within her ; and here was she, drawn by this absurd but imperious call to the spot where, if dead, the body of her friend should be, although she would not allow her mind to dwell upon the possibility of his death.

That Mistral should fish instead of watching vexed her, yet she knew that whatever came must come to them, nor would exertion upon their parts aid.

She schooled herself to patience, glancing at times at the vast yellow rock above them, "washed with the morning's water-gold," each cranny and ledge defined with marvellous clearness.

Célestin sniffed. Fish were upon the move, as he knew, albeit he had had no bite as yet. A wide-winged osprey, all liver-and-white like a pointer, was circling low; flap, flap. Ah! it had turned head under, had fallen plumb: the water rose in a white fountain; presently it was upon the surface again, flapping strongly, the wet flying from its quills, rising heavily, its prey kicking hard, a dazzle of silvery flank and swishing tail, a clean bass. Mistral sniffed again, smelling fish, and watched his lines jealously. It was Sue who followed the flight of the bird, its laboured start, its circling to gain the uplift of the wind; she saw it climb the heights towards its eyrie upon the cliff, and lo! as she watched, her eyes widened; that sad, anxious look, which the flight of the fisher-eagle had for a moment beguiled and softened, fled, her lips fell apart, her brows drew together, the forehead furrowed above them, every sense waiting upon and lending its forces to the eye. There, upon a ledge high aloft, so distant, so remote that all sense of proportion was defeated, stood, defined against the pallor of the sun-washed stone, the figure of a man. But it was surely an optical delusion, or a sea-mark, for it was too tiny for a human figure, or indeed for a child; and yet, in that magically clear morning light, its proportions and members were distinctly human. It was dressed as a soldier, but was bareheaded, it stood bolt upright as a soldier stands upon parade. Oh, absurd; it must be a doll, a mannikin. But how got it there? It had no visible foothold, no smallest means of support; it seemed adhering to the naked cliff-face as a pictured figure adheres to its canvas.

And then, "It is alive, *its hands are moving!* Oh," she gulped low and hoarsely and got to her feet, and ere Célestin could turn his head, a glorious scream of pure joy cleft the sea-silence like the cry of a fife. 'Twas nature's charging note, her battle-cry from the lips of a girl, her summons to extreme and utmost exertion. The startled man crouched low, swept the rock-face vaguely, followed her outstretched finger, and spied from under his hand.

"It is a spirit, madam; alas that we should have seen it! It will bring us ill-luck! A man? the Colonel? He is in heaven a week since; and no human foot has ever reached where *that* is standing."

"But, it is he—he—HE! I can see him. I know him! Look, he is waving to us!"

It was the faintest of signals, but it served. The girl threw up her rounded chin and, filling her fine chest with sea-wind, sent her hail soaring up the cliff:

"We—will—save—you.—Hold on—still!"

Again, and yet again she shrilled, her column of white throat pulsing with its upper note. The tiny hand so far aloft there wagged its weak countersign. The girl turned to her companion. "Pull to the shore, man, pull!"

But the Catalan, crouched upon his thwart, sat hunched, biting his fingers, pallid and mute, his eyes to seaward, and when he opened his lips it was to curse softly and brokenly in his mother-tongue. Alas! a woeful man was Mistral, for there, to the nor'-eastward that black *guarda costa* was leaping through the water towards them, the blue sparkling wavelets boiling beneath twinkling oar-blades.

"I am lost—lost! Oh, why did the lady tempt me?" He wept aloud, hiding his face in his hands. But the girl sprang upon him, snatching at his wrists, shaking him by the shoulders.

"Wretch!—Coward!—Misérable!—Lâche!—Poltron!" Sue, who had never known that she had a temper, was letting herself go in two languages. "*Beast!*—be a man—a man! . . . Row for the shore, and we will climb, run, anything!—row! Do ye think that the good God who has kept that poor soul alive for a week up there will fail him now? Give me the oars!"

Her edged words, her blazing eyes, the breath poured hot upon him from her panting bosom, stung the man to action, as the yell of his rider calls upon a failing horse to extend himself in a final effort. Mistral laid himself out to row; the boat sprang under him.

There was no landing-place within hundreds of yards, and it was to cut them off from reaching any that the galley was speeding. Both craft were converging upon the same point: the fishing-boat had the better start, but the galley travelled the faster, and had other resources. Sue, watching the knit brows and clenched jaw of her rower, beheld the light of a new terror distend his eye, and its imminence tighten the cordage of his brown throat. She turned in her seat. The galley, not a furlong distant, and cleaving the blue water with a terrible silent swiftness, was about to do something. Three men were moving upon her forecastle around an object which shone and shifted. Two crouched, one bent, there was the gleam of burnished brass, and then a ball of snow-white wool leapt, and within it was a spark of fire. Simultaneously,

something like a big bird flying with incredible velocity struck the water upon their starboard quarter and passed close astern. The shock of sound followed and Sue realised the awful fact of War.

A soldier's daughter, a soldier's sister, and herself at this moment upon her way to save a soldier's life, the heart within her arose and laughed with a touch of the grim, fierce *gaudium certaminis* of her race. She could have sung, shouted, danced. To die on such a glorious morning? Absurd! And with God's warrant in their hands, His messengers! Ridiculous!

"They have missed us, man; do not falter—row, row, row!"

Mistral groaned, but held on. He altered his course so as to lessen the mark which he displayed to the gunner.

"You shall not be hurt," cried Sue. "See, I cover you!" She arose and stood screening the straining oarsman behind her flowing skirts, and faced the gunners (still nearer now and reloading with nimble haste), shaking out her white neckerchief in gallant defiance.

The sea-washed cliffs are past, the first of the beach is near, those sands which thin out to the south of Catalan Bay under the East Face, a landing-place protected only by a block-house, since the experiences of many sieges has taught our enemies that nought is to be gained by occupying a strip of beach overlooked by impregnable cliffs. The boat's keel grates, they are in, but—*here it comes again!* The gun-servers crouch, the captain of the piece bends over the breech of his swivel. The girl swings her hand aloft with a clear laugh of mockery: she must, she will succeed. Célestin springs from his seat and drags her down upon him. Boom!—*crack!* the ball knocks the rudder-head to splinters, clears their prostrate forms by a hand's breadth, and ploughs its way up the beach.

"Up, lady—run for your life." He leaps overside, catches, carries, sets her down dryshod, and, gripping her hand, speeds breathlessly towards the distant block-house. A sentry paces there with futile regularity. Stupid creature, can he do no more? And the block-house stands white and mute! *Bang!*—a masked battery quite near has opened. It has only a couple of pieces, placed there but a day since at the prayer of the fishermen. The galley sheers off. *Bang!* again, and something has happened, for men cheer, and a boat is run down the beach, but Célestin and Sue race on without turning their heads.

A match against time is theirs, and the stake no longer their own lives, but the life of the dying man upon the cliff behind them. Célestin, that lean and sinewy man, is no mean

runner. Sue lifts her skirts and flies light-footed as a fawn along the hardened sand of the sea-marge. Mistral is recognised, a breathless reply to a friendly challenge passes them on toward the North Front. He strides beside and ahead of her, her hand in his.

"Man, what—did—I tell—you?—God——"

"Keep your breath, lady. Ah yes, I know. Let them call you heretic who will, these eyes saw your hands turn the balls! What more could a saint from heaven——?" He crosses himself whilst running.

CHAPTER XII

THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

MONDAY morning. The condemned man sate in his cell with his empty hands upon his knees and his eyes upon the wall. The stout cable of hope by which he had hung over Tophet for a week past had been giving strand by strand ; it was worn to its last thread.

That strayed lunatic, his enemy, had not been traced. The fellow had disappeared ; in what manner, or for what reason, other than loss of reason, he, Boyle, confessed himself unable to offer any plausible suggestion. " He is gone, damn him ; and I am to die for it ! 'Tis hardish cheese, ye'll allow, sir ! " he had said to his latest visitor, the officer to whose keeping he had been committed. The man had looked in after his prisoner had taken his breakfast to ask if there was anything that he could do for him.

This had been the ostensible excuse for the call ; its unexpressed reason, understood by both, had been to afford opportunity for confession. There had been no confession. The officer had lingered, had sate in silence, but his prisoner, whilst entirely appreciating the attention, had nothing to communicate.

" Major Boyle," said the man at length, rising to leave, " I am bidden inform ye that the memorial put forward by your mess beseeching the Governor's clemency has failed."

" The deuce it has ! What said his Excellency ? " asked the condemned man, achieving nonchalance with an effort. This was the last filament ; it too had parted.

" Sir, as ye bid me, I'll tell ye his exact words. They were these : ' Gentlemen, I have heard of your black bean.' "

Boyle snapped his fingers.

The bravado rang false as a cracked dollar. His visitor, an Englishman and a person of small stature, regarded his man with veiled anxiety. This giant Irishman was a foreigner and incalculable. How would such a person behave ? For the credit of the army he hoped there might be no loss of

nerve. "Would Mr. Boyle please to call for a tankard of old ale—of stingo?"

The Major would not, but would be pleased to take wine with him.

"The wine shall be brought to you, sir; for myself, I seldom drink so early," said the officer, and left, excusing himself upon the score of duty.

The bolts grated. Boyle, drawing hot breaths through distended nostrils, glared at the closed door. Tear-an-ages! This Saxon pock-pudding had declined to touch glasses with him. The fellow actually professed to believe him guilty. He sprang to his feet and paced the cell passionately, four strides and a right-about, cursing; but soon reseated himself with a short yelp of joyless laughter, and fell a-musing. The hand that lay upon his enormous thigh contracted. The huge muscle was still seasoned and firm.

"And to think that wan hour from now 'twill be meat—could meat! and I mesilf under the moulds, the sands of the North Front, mebbe; and that's strange, Con Boyle, when ye come to think of ut—mighty strange!"

"Major Boyle, the guard!"

It had come to this, then. After all, he had had no such bad time of it, considering everything. He was not going to whimper. He had lived his life, had kissed and fought; had sent six fellows this road with his own hand, and had watched a score or so travel it at one time or another.

The atrocious injustice of his own particular case made his eye flash and hardened his mouth: but, "Stiddy, me son! ye have the honour of the Ould Country to uphold, and 'twill soon be over. This mar'rch to the ground will be a cursud nuisance, but ye will carry yersilf like a gintleman. Ye have been to yer juty and made yer sowl (a bit late in the day, mebbe, but his riv'rence assures ye 'twill be all right). And, for the rist, the firing party will point high and give ye as little throuble as may be. Eyes front!"

Never had the condemned man borne himself more soldierly than upon this his last march. The whole garrison was under arms, all, that is, save his own regiment, which was confined to its barracks, its ammunition called in, its side-arms and muskets chained and padlocked and guarded by doubled sentries, and, worst disgrace of all, with d'Angeli's Corsicans stationed in the street without, with guns in the intervals of the companies trained upon the barrack gate.

Sir George would take no risks, but neither would he yield one jot to the covert threat of mutineers *in posse*. He might have ordered this military execution to be carried out where he chose, in the moat, for instance, outside the South Port

gates, escutcheoned with crumbling heraldries, or at the Arsenal, but no; the North Front was the place sanctioned by usage, and there this murderer should die, though Spain opened upon his firing party, or a mutinous regiment blocked the route. Our Governor would not inaugurate the greatest siege of the century by a display of nerves.

Never had the condemned man felt himself more alive than at this, his last hour. With senses at their keenest, he observed the features of familiar thoroughfares and the human faces which lined them. At the corner of Prince Frederic Street he caught the eye of Painter waiting to see him pass. He had seen the woman thrice at her mistress's door and knew her again. He confronted the sour pleasure of her look with no answering scorn. Of her mistress and her guests he could think at that moment without bitterness; the fashion of this world was passing away and the lusts thereof.

Through the Land Port the men tramped, down the length of the Governor's Meadow, past Forbes's Barrier, wound along the covered way for a while beneath the shadow of the enormous cliff; then a few steps across the naked sands brought them to a spot near the eastern beach. There they halted, set their prisoner with his face to the south-east beside his open grave. Yes, it had come to this; the passing about of petitions for reprieve, the lobbying and consulting and laying of heads together on the one side, and upon the other the tight-lipped refusals to move, backed by the ladies led by that dragon Trigge, *pollice verso*.

It was not the Hardenbergs only who held to the theory of the man's innocence. Many officers who had not sate upon the court-martial dissented from its findings and deplored its sentence: holding upon principle, as one may say, that no gentleman bearing His Majesty's commission should be condemned for murder upon circumstantial evidence alone.

The captain commanding the firing party was of this way of thinking, and went about his duty with resolute disgust, hoping against hope for a reprieve, for the intervention of something—anything, he cared not what.

What were the views of the squad he commanded, who knows? The twelve privates had been chosen by lot from as many different regiments, so that no corps in especial should bear the odium of the deed and incur the vengeance of the Hardenbergs. The prisoner, as he faced his executioners, beheld the variety of facings with a slight lift of the brows; then, as his eye caught the weak, shifting glance of the man exactly in front of him, sixth from the right, it contracted with a swift effort of memory. Where had he met that fellow before? A trivial question to engage the thoughts

of a man upon the edge of eternity, but it passed the time, and instantly the answer came to him; he had seen that long nose and retreating chin beneath the peak of a montier-cap in a coach somewhere; yes, and under a parson's wig at a wedding—his own wedding! The Reverend Octavius Baskett, B.A., stood before him, ex-servitor of Christ Church, Oxford; more recently a felon and a fugitive from justice, and at present serving as Private Septimus Wallet in H.M. 56th Regiment of Foot.

The recognition was mutual and distasteful to both. Boyle glanced aside.

The captain, growling like a surly bull-dog, dressed his men and passed down the line, inspecting the cartridges; there should be no blanks. "Load!" He repassed, inspecting the locks; all were at full-cock; there should be no shirking. All was ready; he nodded to the chaplain. The burial service began, the old familiar words read over a living man.

They had with them a sergeant's guard of sappers, but chancing upon an old *tenaille*, the officer in command had forborne to break fresh ground. It was cast at him later, that had he obeyed the letter of his instruction, things had gone otherwise; but let that be.

The prisoner stood with his toes to the trench as the chaplain began his office. He did not listen. His eyes were set upon the great expanse of sea before him, over which the low morning sun had spread a golden net. It was gloriously clear, ten thousand little waves were leaping upon one another's shoulders to see the spectacle. There was a boat in the offing, a long, black boat; he lost sight of it. He had declined the bandage, and by looking a trifle to the right could follow the perspective of crags, receding bastion beyond bastion along the precipitous Eastern Face; could overlook the sands at their feet as far as Catalan Bay, and could see along those sands two figures running, a man and a woman. Hand-in-hand they ran, and were running fast, as those run who bring news which will not wait. The chaplain stammered on, but the dying man, so brimful of life and so keen of apprehension, was watching those runners. Nearer they came, and nearer; the woman ran well, but was plainly outpaced; she stumbled, the other released her hand and came on alone. He was a native, by his red *beret*. The whimsical idea crossed Boyle's mind that this Scorpion had news of Justin. Suddenly he was almost sure of it, for the runner made signal, increasing his speed.

The chaplain had finished; he closed his book and stepped aside, turning his back upon what was to follow. There was a slight movement perceptible in the firing party, the men

loosening their shoulders in anticipation of the coming order.

"You will fire when ye see the handkerchief drop," said the captain. "*Ready!*" The twelve muskets moved to the hip with mechanical precision——

Again the runner, too breathless and too distant to shout, flung up a hand. Boyle was convinced of it now, hope stirred within him, he had thought it dead, it was stung back to life, the life whose last sands were running; he turned to the captain and opened his lips.

"*Present!*" The grey barrels came up to a level floor of burnished steel——

One runner, the woman, had dropped to a walk; the man strained on, swinging his red cap. 'Twas now or never: this messenger had a purpose as regards himself,—*himself!*

"Sir!" he said sharply, half turning; but the stolid, unimaginative Englishman, already warned by the jailor that the prisoner's nerve was shaken, misunderstood him; if there was going to be any play-acting or speech-making, if this fellow was weakening and was about to make a scene, why, the sooner this was over the better for all concerned.

Boyle read his purpose in the man's averted eye. "But, sir—I say!—Hold on for a moment!—*Look!*" He threw a hand out in the direction of the runner.

Too late! The captain's eye wavered, yes, he half turned; but the lips had received their impulse.

"F-fi—*halt!* As you were!" he shouted, for the handkerchief had fluttered from his fingers and was falling.

An irregular scattering volley rang out. Two of the squad withheld their fire; of the rest, some drew trigger irresolutely and with barrels aslant; one only, a man in the centre, with tight-clenched eyelids and blanched lips, drew with a grunt and with an accidentally well-levelled piece, and it was the bullet of Private Wallet that went home. The base of the brain was stricken, and, even as the prisoner stood there—lips parted in passionate appeal, eyes staring wide, and arm and finger at desperate stretch—the final change took place, and what had been Cornelius Boyle pitched forward into the trench without remark or the movement of a limb. The fallen bulk heaved for a moment as though some blind impulse moved it to bury itself in the sand, then the muscles relaxed, it accommodated itself to its pitiful posture and lay still.

The captain turned upon his men a face a-work with anger, but recollected himself and said nothing. The thing was done; the man was dead. The futility of words was obvious. After all, he had but carried out his orders. The chaplain

had seen nothing ; what the men might think or say did not count. " Fill in ! " he said, and stood biting his lip while the sappers plied their spades.

But the runner was coming up, he had ceased waving. The captain recognised him now for Célestin Mistral, a fisherman, and went a few steps to meet him. The fellow, blown by his exertions, was panting hard. The blood was hammering in his ears ; he had not heard the volley ; the execution did not interest him. He had a marvellous tale to tell, rambling, incoherent, as the tale of a man is likely to be who has run a mile at speed : almost incredible too ; a tale of a human figure fixed against the face of the cliff high above the sea, in a position so sheer that no man could have reached it by climbing, nor have kept it for a minute had he gained it. " Yes, he is there, señor ! I have seen him with these eyes, and the lady——"

The woman runner was still afar, but coming ; the Catalan, having got his breath, grew voluble.

" She saw it first—she is a saint from heaven, señor, a very saint of God ! The Spanish galley it give chase, it make fire, two balls, señor ; she turn them with the hant—so ! "

" But this man on a rock, my friend ? What about him ? Who is he ? "

" An officer, señor. Oh, yaas, an Englishman, and an officer by his uniform. Alive ?—mose certain he is alive. He move the arm, so ! "

" My God ! " ejaculated the Captain, with a side-glance at the wide-open eyes in that dead face in the *tenaille*, upon which the shovelled sand was falling. He recovered himself upon the instant. " Quick, you fellows, there ; a woman is coming ! "

The spades worked fast ; when Susan, unconscious of what had happened, came up to substantiate Mistral's incredible tale, the officer could command his voice. Private Wallet, the only man present who divined the lady's interest in the dead, made no sign, and, as the party hurriedly turned their faces towards Forbes's Barrier, the wife's foot was upon the fresh-thrown sand which covered her faithless husband.

BOOK VII

FINIS CORONAT OPUS

CHAPTER I

JUSTIN IS MADE HAPPY

THEY left the poor dead body in its last bed ; there was nothing more to be done for it. But the living, the living ! The tidings flew. Haste ye, oh, haste ! Seven days and nights ! Can he last but one more hour ? We will save him yet !

To the Arsenal then for a squad of riggers, dockyard mateys, handiest of mankind ; for shears and block-tackle, for two mule-loads of three-quarter-inch sennet and away to Mediterranean Battery !

Young Chisholm volunteered for the service ; nay, would take no denial. Older men suggested a sailor, but the lad upon the spot had his way.

" Gin the tow iss soond I'll not be caring a boddle. Ou, ay, 'tis juist naething ava ; mony's the time I've recovered sheep frae desks in Skillacorrie. 'Twill be a morn's plesure for a Hielan'man. Pay oot, there ; and mind the check-line, Travis ! "

But it was an awesome, shivery business, and of necessity tediously slow. The iron-nerved young mountaineer, his bottle of milk-and-brandy strapped under his arm, swung and clung and was lost to sight, and the interminable rope was paid out and out to an endless tenuity of small quivering cord.

Many gallant deeds were done in the course of the four years' siege, but none took men's imagination more than this feat of cragsmanship. Others fought as soldiers fight, some better, some worse, a few supremely well ; but this was *hors de règle*. Those who watched said that at times he clung like a bat to a wall, and at others crawled like an ant, or hung spinning in the wind like a spider.

Far below, three hundred and fifty feet above the sea and

four hundred below the parapet of the battery, a human figure stood stiffly upon its ledge, more like a statue in its niche than a thing of flesh and blood ; foodless, waterless for a week past, save for Thursday's rain, and (think of this) knowing nothing of the means taken for its relief.

" I had to seek oot ma man first," said Chisholm afterwards, " and that wass nane sae easy, sirs ; for there iss a wheen desks doun yonder, I can tell ye. An' yon Scorpion chiel in his boatie below was nane sae dee-finite in his signalling as I could ha'e wushed, ye mind. Ou, ay ; an' when I spied ma man it wass nane sae easy to reach him. An' the risk o' lossing him at the last. I kenned weel that it wass upo' the cairts that he micht slip through ma fingers at the feenish, as mony a sheep has dune. Ye creep, ye spik the douce word, and—hey !—the puir silly beastie has moved and is ower the brink and gane for iver ! But the Colonel iss a man, sirs ! He wass far gane, nae doot, but his mind was his ain. His lips were moving, juist a whesper, nae mair. " I—will *not*," he wass sayin', meaning, as I take it, that he would not end the maitter by taking his ain life. It wass grand. Wow ! but there iss naething like resisting the teffle ! "

With infinite care they got him up—light enough he was, a mummy, a thing of sun-dried skin and bone, kept together, as it were, by its bleached and ragged uniform, but alive.

The stretcher-party bore him to his quarters ; the whole garrison was moved : in the little Spanish house two women embraced one another with wild sobbing and laughter.

But the regimental surgeon shook his head. " And oh, tell me of your charity, my dear Mr. Cairncross, what is the treatment in a case like this." The man addressed, surgeon of the 73rd, a person of large experience, rubbed a grizzled chin. " Slops, my friend, and—after that what ye will, for I defy ye to kill your man. What ! Cannot ye see that he has made up his mind to live ? "

The man had made up his mind to live, and there was no more to be said about it. There are men who are practically unkillable. Every house-surgeon knows the type. A batch of deplorable objects is brought in from an explosion, say, or from a fire ; some collapse at once, bulky men of fine physique these, not by any means the worst cases, surgically considered, but there is something wanting in their organisations : they are susceptible to shock, and there is nothing to be done for them. Others die as the days and weeks go on : they are badly hurt, no doubt, if not so badly hurt as the worst ; but their will-power relaxes, they cease to struggle, and after that neither surgery nor nursing can put into them what is not there. But there are others, the one or the two, possibly the

worst hurt of all, cases which, according to the books, have no right to live, cannot live, indeed, but who lie there for weeks muffled from head to foot in cotton-wool, calcined cinders of humanity, cracking their jokes with the sister and the surgeon until Death grows tired of waiting for them, and they pull through by dint of their own inherent vitality.

The Colonel was of this type, sound, wiry, tenacious; his doctor presently recognised that he had in him an excellent subject, and one whom it paid better to humour than to cross. Thus, when he asked for this one, or that, 'twas wisdom to allow him his visitor.

His Excellency the Governor must come, must hear from feebly moving lips the true and particular story of how this man had come to be where he was, the history of those bullet-holes in the cloth, and the rest of it. The cap figured large in the recital. When blown from his head by poor Boyle's would-be murderous shot it had fallen into a bush some twelve feet below the parapet, and had seemed so temptingly near and accessible that its owner must needs essay recovery. When almost in hand the thing had detached itself and fallen farther, and whilst he had leaned over to watch its fall, some twig or stone had given, and he himself had gone sliding, and catching, and sliding down the face, bringing up at length in a mass of prickly dwarf palm, scratched but uninjured, but in a position from which there was no exit upward. Thence he had followed the ledges and crevices downward for hours, until, exhausted by heat and thirst, some false movement, resulting in a second slip and scramble, had deposited him standing upon a ledge so narrow that movement in any direction was out of the question. The rest was the story of one hundred and seventy hours of barely endurable anguish, thirst, hunger, weariness; baked through by the sun all day, chilled to the bone all night, he had held to his resolution and seen it out.

His Excellency listened and nodded: he was one of those great spirits who are never in a hurry, and have always time upon their hands for a kind and thoughtful action. This was the man who, later in the siege, visited the bedside of a wounded prisoner for no other purpose than to induce the poor, broken-hearted fellow to submit to amputation, and succeeded.

"Colonel, I wish ye a good-day, and shall hope to see ye again. My court-martial did no more than substantial justice, for your enemy was a murderer in intention, if not in fact."

There were other visitors to the bedside, and it was whilst in attendance there that young Chisholm, for whom the very stars in their courses would seem to have been fighting, sustained his second set-back.

His first had been the disconcerting discovery that the marriage repudiated by Boyle had been performed by an ordained clergyman and was valid. This information had been given him by Travis, ostensibly in a moment of brotherly confidence, but with the unexpressed purpose of forestalling complications.

The death of Boyle having removed this impediment, Chisholm had hoped that by allowing a reasonable time for the girl's mind to resettle after the shock, and to turn gradually toward himself, he would best attain his end.

"The leddy is puir, and so's masel': wow; but there'll be gey quick promotion for some of us before lang. What if I ask the Colonel to pairmet a betrothal? I wad wait for my company before marrying if they wad consent to nae better."

Thus musing, and awaiting his friend's more complete restoration to lay his request before him, it was at the bedside itself, and from the feebly muttering lips of the half-slumbering convalescent (still a living skeleton and of an infantile weakness) that the lad learned the unwelcome news of his lady's fortune.

"Dray, my boy," whispered the sick man, mistaking his visitor for his ward, "Ye need not keep it from your sister any longer . . . She's rich, and may just as well know it . . . Twenty thousand pounds. . . . Her husband, poor fellow, will never claim marital rights now. . . . Some fortune-hunters in the garrison may give us trouble; there are plenty of needy men in the messes; but her own good sense and ourselves can see to that; eh, Dray?"

"Yes, sir, pairfeckly," muttered poor Chisholm, and watched the Colonel drop asleep comforted with having got off his mind what had been troubling him, leaving his visitor gnawing a tortured lip.

"'Tis not my faither's son that will be miscalled fortune-hunter to the face of him twice, whateffer! Twenty thoosan' poonds English! Oh, it cows! How is a puir Scots shentleman to gang coortin' sic a leddy? Hoo can I set a puir nief o' thin shillings (a gulpin, nae mair) against twenty thoosan' poonds English? There's nane wull believe I want her for hersel'. I'll be the byword o' the messes, a beggarly adventurer, a mercenary fortune-hunter!"

And so it befell that when Sue would willingly have seen more of her friend, and was wanting to hear from his own lips the thrilling tale of his two hours at the tow's end (a feat which had made men's heads swim to think of), the poor, proud lover gravely and shyly held aloof.

Nor were opportunities for distinguishing himself forthcoming (he underrated the impression made by his rescue: in his own eyes it was not War, and War alone counted).

Spain, content with having stopped the cattle-ships, had laid her plans for a blockade; there would be no assault.

Meanwhile, unaware of the distress which he had caused to a lad for whom he entertained the warmest admiration and would have gone far to serve, the patient was gaining in strength daily. Susan, of course, must see him, and with Susan came Julia Hollinghurst, a-tremble with hard-curbed feeling. If no mutual understanding was come to, at least the interview improved the patient's spirits and was repeated. The ladies were often with him; he was pronounced out of danger; his ultimate recovery was certain; each day registered an advance, and other visitors were admitted.

Célestin Mistral came, by request of the patient, hardly by permission of the doctor, but the Colonel was now mending so fast, and making flesh so rapidly, as to have practically resumed command of his room. He was impatiently watching the door; the lean, lightly-stepping Catalan entered silently, and took his stand at the foot of the bed, making the graceful, self-respecting salutation of his nation to the señor and the ladies, Mrs. Hollinghurst and Sue, seated one upon either side of the bed's head, the former somewhat behind it.

"My man (Mistral is your name, they tell me), I am truly glad to see you again. Never, I think, was I so glad to see any one as when I saw you below me that morning. What?—three weeks ago, is it?"

"Three weeks and two days, my colonel. I haf the honour to offer you, and these ladies, my congratulations, ah!—from the heart, señor!"

"I am obliged to you, my man. I have sent for you, Mistral, to thank ye. If ever living man owed thanks to another they are due from me to you. And now comes my difficulty. I can never repay ye what I owe; but my heart will not be at rest unless ye allow me to make sure that ye join in my happiness. This little purse——"

"Señor—my colonel," exclaimed the fisherman, making a half-step back, and withdrawing the hand which he had instinctively extended in response to the first movement of Justin's, "that cannot be. What I did I did for hire. I am paid, yes, señor, overpaid already. The good God does not bless the fishing of those who are paid twice. The señora—Your pardon, señora! ah, what have I said?" He stopped, hesitating at the hand which Mrs. Hollinghurst had lifted in warning. Justin, who had not been intended to see the signal, but who had seen it reflected in a wall-glass behind the Catalan, turned his head towards the lady, but she had hastily risen, and had left the room.

"Ah, señor, is it that I, then, have done wrong? Have

they not told you ? When I ventured I did it at the lady's bidding. 'Recover the señor's body,' she said. Yes, two hundred dollars for the señor's body, or a thousand for him living ! And since, by the grace of God, you are alive, the bounteous señora who has just left the room has paid me the reward promised. How, then, shall I accept money from your hand, my colonel ? "

"She engaged you to search, and has paid you for finding, and has kept it from me ? She did all this. Here, man, take this purse for your news. Let me touch your hand, my friend, so ! And now I will bid good-day t'ye. To our better acquaintance when I am about again. . . . Sue, where is Mrs. Hollinghurst ? Get her here—fetch her. Yes, ye may say I need her at once—at once, Sue."

The girl sped light-heeled, radiant with anticipation, not a thought in her heart of her own part in the matter, which to another might have seemed overlooked. For the boat-expedition and the race she had been thanked already and abundantly. What more wanted she ? Her success was in itself an overflowing reward. After all, the Catalan was Julia's discovery (her own intervention came second). Let Julia be crowned for the feat. "Julia ! he wants you ; he is calling for you ; he said——"

Justin heard the soft frou-frou of woman's dress, and the gentle closing of the door behind the screen. "Ye sent for me, Colonel." Mrs. Hollinghurst was beside him, a woman softly bright, the right nurse aspect, inwardly tense to the breaking point.

"Madam, what is this ? The man Mistral tells me——"

"Sir, ye must not excite yourself—the doctor——"

"Be hanged to him ! I am a well man this minute, ma'am ! Answer me. Is it to you—to *you* that I owe my worthless life ? "

Her mouth was all a-quiver, her eyes swam in happy tears.

"Then, Julia, 'tis yours, if ye will have it. I had hoped—I had thought to say this when I was up and out again, when I was sure of—of my strength. It seems such a poor thing to offer, a man upon his back ; in the ward, too ; but such as he is, such as ye have made him, ma'am——"

The woman was already upon her knees beside the bed, her face hid in the coverlet, weeping passionate tears of joy. The bed stirred under her. Her small right hand lay just beyond his reach, he wrought to reach it, caught and held it, "May I keep it ? "

"'Tis yours, sir, long since. Did ye not save it ? Oh, Wade, Wade, think well what ye are doing. I am the poorest creature ; no match for such as ye, sir ! "

CHAPTER II

A FORLORN HOPE

AND now, if I did my duty, or consulted my own inclination, I should introduce a discursus upon Human Action considered as the Resultant of co-operant and antagonistic forces. I won't ; but will confess to laying the pen down with a sigh, thinking what one of the Great Names of my craft would have made of such an opportunity in the unhurried days wherein an author wrote to please himself, whilst his public—a leisured and discriminating public it must have been—took thankfully from his hand what he considered to be best for it.

Come to think of it, the most trivial, as the most conspicuous of our resolutions and performances, are due to the push-and-pull of people of whom we know very little, or possibly nothing. It is so with Earth's greatest ; a Napoleon is dragged willy-nilly to Moscow by the necessities of a false position, fights his Leipsig on compulsion, and is stranded upon St. Helena by a series of fatuous mistakes (his own and other people's) arising from defective information, imperfect apprehension, stupidity, and the nature of things.

In a word, we none of us stand alone.

Here, in this my story, but just out of focus, are crowds of worthy folk, surly German foot-soldiery, silent Quaker seamen, each man of them living his own life and conceiving of himself as the centre of the universe, the ages having been expended in bringing just himself to the birth, and all human circumstance revolving around his five-feet-nine of warm, sentient, esurient humanity. I would realise every man of them all to you, but who is sufficient for these things ? Who of us can even depict a crowd ? Yet they are very far from lay figures, these living, breathing, fellow-men ; and all through this story, unknown to themselves and to us, they have been influencing its action, and now, for once, the deflection of a principal character is obviously due to their repulsion.

The officers' mess of Lord M'Leod's regiment was quite human ; its individual members were subject to the infirmity

of petty jealousy, for instance, as our young friend Chisholm was made aware. To his brother ensigns, and to the captains above them in rank, there seemed of late to have been just a little too much Chisholm. To these gentlemen, every man of whom was poor and keen, their fellow-subaltern's luck in holding the centre of the stage was an offence. This hawk-nosed, red-faced lad with the unflinching eyes, who had silently forereached upon the other subalterns, and was said to be known by sight to His Excellency the Governor himself, must needs have been regarded askance by envious captains who asked for nothing but fair play and the chances of service, and could see favouritism in a change of weather. In such presence young John must walk warily: he would have been snubbed had he given his rivals an opportunity.

To our dispassionate view theirs is ridiculous. What had he done? His evidence had cost a (comparatively) innocent man his life; his skill and nerve had saved a doomed man from death: the feats might be held to cancel one another, but both were the talk of the Rock, and at a time when there was nothing else to discuss.

The youth's accomplishments laid him under suspicion, and his personality, simple as it seems to us, was an enigma to his comrades. "Had he nae the English?" We were hardly aware of it, but the blend of Lowland Scotch that is spoken at Perth (where Chisholm had spent a year in learning it), complicated by constructions and transpositions natural to a man who still dreamed in the Gaelic, was erudition to the Mackays, Mackenzies, Sutherlands, and Gunns, who still thought in the tongue which our first parents used in Paradise, and were slowly and painfully acquiring a bowing acquaintance with the language of the book of military regulations. To them his fluency was phenomenal; they credited him with the gift of tongues (to do him justice, the lad had facility, and had improved his opportunities; was he not at work at his Moghrebi "curly-whirlies"?).

But this was not the worst. The fellow was too lucky to be popular. Alone of his mess he had lady friends. This favoured youngster had the *entrée* of the little Spanish house in Prince Frederic Street; he was a *persona grata* to Mrs. Hollinghurst, whose reputation for opulence had not diminished in its passage from mouth to mouth, and now included the lady's fellow guest. With this lady he had made the passage out; did he not cultivate the friendship of the lady's brother?—had he not put her guardian under an obligation?

The inference was too obvious to dispute; yet the ridiculous fellow did dispute it, and, upon an occasion, when greatly pushed, had sworn hotly that he had neither prospect nor

expectation of marriage, and that as to the jocularities and innuendos of gentlemen whose rank and the regulations prevented him from replying to them as he would have preferred to do, he begged them to believe once for all that the person at whom he understood them to be aimed, whose name should on no account pass his lips, was just as poor as himself.

After such a declaration by a lover in such company the discovery of his lady's fortune was a sore blow. He raged under it, silently, for there was not a soul to whom he could confide his trouble. Fate, whilst removing one stumbling-block from his path, had maliciously replaced it by another. "Fortune-hunter," the Colonel had called him; unconsciously, no doubt, and by implication merely, but the word had gone home, and the wound to his pride rankled. And what would his mess think, and say, if close upon the heels of his passionate repudiation he announced his betrothal to a lady of fortune whose means he had so singularly depreciated during his courtship?

These were the men with whom he must spend the next few years of his life; there is no escape from one's mess in a besieged garrison; no selling out; no exchange; nor, in his case, any opportunities for the service to which he looked forward—some desperate feat, some forlorn hope which might set his sword in the scale against his lady's guineas.

No, there was (as it seemed) to be no fighting. But there would be scurvy. It had already appeared, and would soon be epidemic. Fresh food the garrison must have; but whence was it to be obtained? The fleet? The fleet having careened and cleaned ship, had sailed for Home, where it would arrive in time to be cooped up at Spithead for the rest of the summer, relinquishing the Channel to the combined armadas of France and Spain, which swept our flag from the home seas and threatened us with invasion. A grievous time for England: her senior service was not at its brightest; there was slackness, petulance, want of enterprise and absence of co-operation all round. English commanders were content with cannonades at long range, and complicated and tedious evolutions in which French seamanship scored, leaving us the sere laurels of indecisive engagements, such as that off Brest. After months of this sort of thing, the admirals would quarrel and come home complaining that their subordinates could not be depended upon to see the signal for close fighting. Our best man, Rodney, crippled by gout and debt, was hiding from his creditors in Paris. The day of Nelson* and his band

* Then a penniless lieutenant of twenty-one and an unknown quantity.

of heroic brethren, ready to dare all, and to second one another to the uttermost, was still afar.

Gibraltar was left to its own resources ; scarcity was staring the Governor in the face ; there would be deaths from sheer privation presently. But one thing at a time. How was he to combat this new enemy, scurvy ?

And in the very nick, a brig flying English colours came up under reefed topsails before a Levanter, dipping her dolphin-striker at every plunge, for all she rode so high and was so crank. Round the Point she came, close inshore, and made her way in quiet water to the Arsenal.

It was the *Mary of Yarmouth* back from Port Mahon with a cargo of—what think you ?—lemons, my friend ! and, by God's grace, Spanish onions !—commodities priceless at that juncture, which her Quaker skipper was, as appeared, willing to sell at something less than the famine prices which the absurd fellow might have asked and taken.

The good soul went to pay his respects to "Miss Susan, ma'am," bringing a present of grapes and pomegranates ; saw the Colonel, heard the news ; saw "Mister Chis'm," and, deeply pondering, went aboard again dissatisfied. Sue returned his call, as did her lover, but they did not call upon the same day, and there were a forced gaiety and a restlessness in the manner of both : Furley prayed and pondered.

And still the lover held aloof from his love, punishing himself and her. How that sweet little face pursued him with its aspect of mute wonder, sad, puzzled, not yet reproachful, but with a dawning consciousness of unmerited suffering in its eyes ! How every trait of it appealed to him, the low broad brow, the full, sweet mouth with its small, gray, mouse-ear mole beside the upper lip ! Ah, but it maddened him, this vile misery of being poor and proud.

And again Chisholm came aboard and sate in a pit of dour silence, from which his old friend would in no wise help him out ; and as they sate, discoursing at whiles of trivialities, the threat of half rations, the rumour that the Channel blockade had been raised, and that the White Lappel had plucked up heart again to see the back of the Wight, the prospects of an autumn convoy, and (mark this, an' it please ye) *the price of beef*, the men's eyes met. Which spoke first ? Did the flint strike fire from the steel, or the steel from the flint ? In a dozen sentences the thing was broached, accepted, and planned. The men arose, holding one another's hands.

"B'Gawd, Master Chis'm, yew'r a man !"

"By Cot, Maister Furley, ye are anither !"

The Governor glanced up as his visitors were announced,

and laid down the lemon which he was sucking : his eye twinkled. " I have to thank ye for this, Mr. Furley. What is your will ? "

Of Chisholm the great man took no direct notice, but the Ensign felt his commander's eye upon him, and knew that he was known.

It was Furley, his woollen nightcap still upon his head, Quaker-fashion, who plunged straight into business.

" Friend Eliott, yew've run out o' beef. It sorter sim'd to me, and my young friend hare, as how we might goo and git ye some."

" Ho ? " remarked the Governor, " is that it ? I appreciate your good intents, but things have worsened since ye cleared for Mahon, sir. Ye come too late. Tangier and Tetuan and the other cattle-ports are closed to us."

" But the Riff Coast be much as usual, friend."

" The pirate coast ? We have never traded thither ; nor have we an agent."

" Mebbe. But we reckons as how we could find ye one. Sims the Sultan o' Barbary be a bit upset with ye ; but he be allus upset with they riffians. Time he were friendly they boarded us ; now he's contrary we reckons to find 'em well-disposed. D'ye see ? "

The Governor stared. " They are masterless savages : so much we all know. What more do ye know about them ? Ah, I remember, ye did some of them an excellent good turn. Which reminds me, Mr. Furley, that I miscalled ye once, for which, knowing ye better, I have since been sorry."

" ' God A'mighty's Jackass,' was it ? What o' that ? Not a mossel o' harm in the word, friend Eliott ; fact, I took it for praise. Come to think on't, an ass were the only thing as my Saviour ever said He had need of. . . . Yes ; as to them Moors, we did 'em as we'd be done by, and naterally ain't afeared to look 'em in the face next time as we meets 'em. But, friend, we've another anchor out to winnard, my young friend Chis's'm hare," turning to the subaltern, " Spik up tew'm, bor ! "

The lad saluted, and stood ready to explain his proposals upon permission granted. His General looked him over.

" Ha, my dragoman extraordinary ! Still at your Moghrebi ? "

" I am, your Excellency ; it passes the time. But in this business I am na leaning upon my puir skill in a deeficult language."

" And what plan is this of yours, Mr. Chisholm ? " The Governor's eye was kind and encouraging ; it was thus he won the men who backed him through.

" Sir, there iss a laddie wha works for the Catalans roon'

at the Eastern Face, wha I haf foregaithered wi'. He iss a Moor. He swam ashore from the *guarda costa* that ventured in too close on the morn of the execution, and wass sunk by a shot from the masked battery. Noo, sir, by God's grace the lad is ane of Maister Furley's seven guests. He thinks a' the warl' of Maister Furley. He says that Maister Furley's day's wark iss the talk o' the Riff Coast, and that we wad be feasted there. Ou, ay, I ken weel that we maunna pit muckle faith in a heathen Moor, forbye, he wass a slave when he escapit, for the Kaid had brent his village and sold him to the Spaniards at Ceuta, and naiturally he will sing a guid sang to win hame ance mair."

"And knowing all this?" queried the Governor. The lad nodded.

"Ou, ay. There's a pickle resks aboot the job, but sae there is in the fechtin'——"

"Or in rope-work on the face of a cliff, young sir! . . . But this may mean slavery. If ye get into the hands of the Riff Moors I know not how I may get ye out. Well, on with your tale. I am all attention."

"Sir, the laddie professes that his faither is a sheik, and that his people have never a market for their kye. I wad trust him. I haf taken the bread and the salt wi' him efter the Eastern manner, and wad make bluid-britherhood too, gin ye gif me leave to gang wi' him."

Eliott nodded gravely once or twice, and deliberately took snuff. "I commend your ingenuity, sir, and your zeal. The risk is such that unless I was sorely in need of meat I would not risk plack nor boddle upon the quest, let alone a brisk young Scots officer. But if I am to hold this place, beef I must have, nor can I await the pleasure of the King's navy, which seems to be busy elsewhere.

"I could give your captain letters of marque and lend him armament. How many guns, sir?" turning to Furley, who bristled almost fiercely.

"Not a pop-gun; not a pistol. God forbid! them's our prencipyles, sir, and them's our safety tew. Doon'tye see as we gooes tew them there Moors as Friends? 'Sheep in the midst o' wolves' (Matthew ten, sixteen). We got tew be wise as sarpints and harmless as doves. If so be as they entreats us kindly and is willin' tew trade beef, why, we trades. If so be as they rounds on us and takes us, why, we're took."

The Governor nodded more gravely, repressing, as we may suppose, fresh references to inspired jackasses. "And your company, are they agreeable?" he asked.

"Wholly agreeable—or thereabouts. Thee see we bin and formed ourselves intew a Preparative Meetin' (I've a

fancy to dew the thing shipshape), and I lain my consarn afore 'em."

"You mean you voted upon it?" asked the Governor, inwardly tickled at the idea.

"Gawd forbid, friend! That ain't our way—the way o' Friends. We set tew and considered it. Some sez one thing and some anawther, and I, bein' clerk, took the weight of the Meetin' to be for liberatin' me for the sarvice. Tew or three of 'em was for appealin' to the Monthly Meeting, what sits in London, or for resignin' membership; but when I lain it down as how they was free to appeal, and free to resign, but must work my ship meantime, they soon toes the line. 'Tis our Friends' way, and a good way tew; no votin', no disputin', no hollerin', no argerin' neyther, but jest the gentle leadin's o' the Holy Sperrit."

The Governor turned to his fellow-countryman. "You understand him, Mr. Chisholm? 'Tis Grick to me!"

"He means he juist set his fut down, sir. Ou, ay, ye may trust him."

CHAPTER III

CAPTAIN FURLEY MAKES PORT

"He has done the thing often, Sue; keep your heart up."

"I know, I know! But oh, Dray, he—they, I mean, are hours overdue, and 'tis such a short run."

"That is nothing. The wind fell light last night before the rain began, and now 'tis so thick that they may be close in and we fail to pick them up. The glass dews over as fast as ye wipe it. Here, let me give it a polish for ye."

Travis was in command of one of the new batteries at Europa Point. His sister was beside him, peering out through an embrasure over a steamy, rainy sea. The horizon was dirty, and low, and near, and unflecked by a sail. They waited and watched, using the glass at intervals, the man concealing from the girl the secret anxieties which oppressed him.

"Hush, Dray, I heard something out there!"

It seemed unlikely, but the man, back from the twentieth inspection of his darling pieces, and satisfied for the moment that their breeches were clothed from the wet and their tompions fitting, lent a tolerant ear.

"There it goes again, Dray!" Travis nodded gravely. "I heard it, a gun, light metal. Let me have the glass. The *Mary* it must be; a brig, anyway; and heading right for us."

"But she cannot be firing, she carried——"

"No guns? More's the pity! Your good old Furley is just as mad as a March hare. Well, well, with all his absurdities he has run a dozen cargoes of good beef when nobody but he would look at the business. Bang! There it goes again!"

"I caught the flash that time, Dray; but it came from the water astern of her. Oh, let me look! . . . No use! my hands shake so. . . . Is there, or is there not, something farther out?"

Her brother did not reply for a while: he dried the lens and refocussed carefully before speaking.

"Sue, old girl, ye had best fall to your prayers. There is another of those cursed galleys closing up on Furley, and unless this wind freshens we shall see him taken before my guns can help him."

And how was it going meanwhile aboard the *Mary of Yarmouth*? The little brig, with every stitch set and drawing, was slipping through the water before a south-westerly breeze abaft her beam, a cargo of beans in bulk under hatches, and her waist filled with dun-coloured, wild-eyed bullocks, tethered by their long horns to a boom hung low between her masts. The run should have been made at night, but a calm had held her idle for some hours, and had now broken with rain—a hot steaming downpour from off the Atlantic. Daylight had shown her to the enemy; that watchful galley had made her out, and was coming up astern, overhauling her slowly, for the *Mary* was upon her best point of sailing, and, if the breeze freshened, might gain the shelter of the Rock batteries yet.

"Friend, I'll take thy trick," said Furley, coming aft and relieving a long-faced steersman over whom a couple of disquieting balls had flown high. "Zabulon, I'll thank thee to git all hands to the shovels and trim them there beans aft. She be a mossel down by the head. Fill up the cabin-bunks and all. The corn'll stop a shot or two, mebbe. Here come another pill!"

The swivel spoke again, again the ball flew wide. The hands below hatches passed buckets of beans through the scuttle in the cabin-floor; the bunks were filled, the cabin itself was soon knee-deep, and still the work went on. Chisholm, standing beside his captain, could hear the grating of shovels and taste the dust.

"Middlin' practice, Mister Chis'sum," remarked Furley, "If I cou'n't lay a gun no better nor that, I'd—I'd—*tarn a Quaker*! But there!" sighing regenerately, "this ain't no talk for One of Us."

The skipper handled his tackles, running an eye over his canvas at intervals, and once in a while scrutinising the slowly nearing galley. The man's phlegm tickled his young companion to the edge of laughter. Chisholm had never been under fire before, and was in a fine glow of high spirits, but anxious withal to be doing something.

A shot plumped in through the brig's run as the westerly swell lifted her stern; the beans absorbed its momentum; it knocked heavily at the cabin floor for admission, and lay quiet.

"Tha's better!" remarked the master, with the feeling of

a connoisseur for a successful effort in his art, and bade his crew, who came scuttling up from below in dismay, muster beneath the shelter of the break of the poop. Thence, a row of pallid faces, they watched their steersman, a deep-chested, imperturbable figure, until a still better-directed missile crashed through the stern bulwark below the taffrail, cut the star-board tiller-tackles, grazed the rail above the watchers' heads, ricocheted through the mainsail, and pitched ahead of the vessel.

"There's gunnery for ye," said Furley, shifting his hold to the tiller itself when the gear parted. The watchers, who had ducked at the wind of the shot with painfully caught-in breaths, heard his comment with astonished admiration.

"They be layin' for ye, sir!" cried Sweetapple.

"More fools they, as would be better empl'yed a-layin' for my top-hamper."

"But keep low, old friend; do 'ee kneel, now."

"I kneels to my Maker. Never did kneel tew an inemy, and ain't a-goin' t' begin to-day. Skip aloft, one on ye, and tell us how we lays for the point. Can't see nawthin' forrard . . . weather be thick as Limehouse on a frosty mornin'."

The breeze freshened; the rain stung at times; the brig made better way; the gunnery fell off. A voice from the fore cross-trees apprised the deck of a big ship coming up hand over hand from the south-west. Chisholm's suspense drove him aloft, whence he presently hailed the news that the stranger was pierced for two tiers of guns.

"Can't make out her colours yet, sir."

The newcomer rose fast, bringing the wind with her. She was setting her studding-sails; her royals followed. It was plain that she had discovered the position of affairs and was for intervening; but upon which side?

Chisholm hailed again. "'Tis not the Jack, sir,—" a moment of grimmest suspense. "Spain, Mr. Furley, red and yellow."

Sweetapple meanwhile had made out the brig's position, O'Hara's Tower showing for a moment dimly through the rain, and too nearly ahead for their comfort. Furley growled something about the indraught from the Straits carrying him east of his port, and laid his brig a point closer to the wind. This lost her some of her way, and the galley crept up and recommenced firing, and with effect: more than one gap showed in the taut wet clothes overhead.

The master's heart rose with the call upon his courage and skill.

"'Twill be touch-and-go, my hearties, so ye might jest as well be putting up your bits of prayers. Thee, Friend

Sammle (to the boatswain), fall tew, if thee feels like it." "Oh yes, sartinly, a nearish thing. . . . I'm more consarned for that there two-decker nor for this skimmin'-dish of a row-boat. Meantime, there's nawthin' for it but tew kip on keepin' on. Bimeby, please God, they'll sorter find themselves tew nigh the batteries for peace an' comfort."

Since the accident to his tackles, Furley was steering by the tiller itself; one massive thigh pressed to the timber held the brig to her course. The man occasionally propped himself upon his left hand, as he peered into the driving rain astern in search of the warship.

With what painful anxieties the crew watched their steersman; upon his judgement hung their liberties, possibly their live: Spain was ungentle to captives. Now and again, when the *Mary* rose sidelong at the westerly swell, that row of puckered eyes just above the level of the poop planking got a glimpse of the dripping overhang of the galley's foreship, the gleam of brass, and the dip and rise of speeding oars.

Crash! The oaken rail above their heads had flown to matchwood, had been struck by something, and there, in the lee scuppers, close to their eyes, rolled a human hand and forearm. And there across his tiller sprawled the skipper, struggling to get his legs under him.

"*Hurt?*" The mate was up the ladder in two leaps, but the master had regained his feet and had thrown a leg over the tiller.

"Back wi' ye—this hare's my job!"

"Likely 'tis, but this here's mine!" rejoined the bone-setter, and, whilst speaking, had drawn from his fob a hank of lay-cord and cast a clove-hitch around the spouting stump of his friend's left arm. The patient submitted under protest, "I were leanin' on it. . . . They sorter shot it from under me and let me down," he remarked in his own excuse, still steering with his legs. "Pretty practice considerin' the sea that's runnin'," he added, watching the rude surgery in progress. Sweetapple had laid a hand-spike between the bone and the great biceps, and, using the stem of a tobacco pipe as a lever, had swiftly and sternly twisted his ligature until the metal pressed home upon the severed artery.

"Tha's neat, bor; thee've stopped *her*," was the patient's comment. "And now back thee gets under cover agin."

"Norrahit. I'll relieve ye—'tis my dooty."

"Blame thy eyes, and thy dooty tew! I be master o' this hare craft, and I'll trouble thee to obey orders!" The man was swaying as he spoke, and as Zabulon saw, who spoke again.

"Thomas, ye be more hurt than ye know—I'm bound to

stay by ye ; fact, 'tis my trick. But afore takin' over the deck I should jest like"—that phial was coming out again—"Ef ye'll be so good as to be so kind as jest to allow me to 'noint ye—not more'n a leetle drop, but mixed wi' the prayer o' faith, ye know"—the stopper was out.

"Git thee t'leeward o' me, Zabulon," growled Furley, "thee and thy mucky iles is an offence to me. . . . Fact, thou savourest somethin' disgustin'!"

How long the dispute would have lasted, and to what heights of scriptural animadversion might have risen, who can say? But whilst the two old comrades argued nose to nose, both speaking at once, the galley-swivel, now within easy range, opened with grape. A capful of musket-balls swished through the canvas, the peak-halliards parted, letting the gaff down; a wounded sheet gave, but the eyes of the crowd in the waist were held by what was happening aft. The Anointer, taken in the midst of his argument, flung his chin up, closed his eyes tightly, and turning half round, pitched stiffly down the sloping deck. The strong life was out of the body before it had ceased sliding.

Furley had fallen too, and was now propped against his tiller, around the loom of which he had thrown his great right arm. Badly hurt he knew himself; a dying man he might be, but the *Mary* should be kept full.

A cry of horror broke from the watchers; it reached the lookout.

"*Who's hit? Is the master well?*" hailed Chisholm, but got no answer save a confused outcry, for all were exclaiming together. Their leaders were down, there was none to take over the command, nor, for the moment, any to lend succour. That stretch of shot-swept, blood-streaked planking was not to be passed by men of ordinary nerves. Do you blame them? Would you, sir, have been braver? Should I, or another non-combatant, have been more prompt? These were common merchant jacks, unfamiliar with the face of war, and shaken by their first experience of the bloody business. The boat-swain pottered, white-faced and irresolute; the cattle in the waist broke into terrified clamour, writhing tethered necks, for something had fallen from aloft. The boy Titus blubbered aloud; some one bade him be still, but, still blubbering, the child scrambled up the poop-ladder, dropped upon hands and knees and crawled along the lee scuppers, passing with tightly closed eyes and streaming cheeks those ghastly trophies of Spanish marksmanship, reached and took the tiller, still blubbering.

"G'back, thee whelp!" growled Furley through the clenched teeth of a mortal agony.

"I 'oon't g'back! Oh, lemme steer her, sir! Oh, lemme take a trick for oncst! O, *dew* lemme!"

"*Thee* steer my ship—a bit of a booy? Goo forrard wi' thee!" Then, as the boy, squirming between fear of Spanish shot and the wrath of his dying captain, retained his hold upon the tiller, "What ails thee, Titus? Whoy dussent thee obey orders? Hain't I hided thee enough? To think that I've bin and gone and rope's-ended thee every Sixth-day raglar, on prencipyle, and thee to up and mutiny as soon's my back is shot threw!"

"Yessir; noosir; 'tain't that. I een't a mewtineer; that I een't! And I 'oon't desert ye, not for noo orders!"

And it was there that Chisholm presently found him, a-quake with the horror of death, the blood of his dying captain upon his bare toes, still blubbering, but keeping her full.

"There's the root of the matter in boy Titus; he should be One of Us," murmured Furley. The youngster heard and felt his little heart swell with the pure pride that wells up when honest service is fully recognised.

It was nearly over now; the next two minutes would see it through one way or the other. The batteries on the Point were almost within range, but the galley was very near, and behind the galley the tall Spanish two-decker, boiling through the water under a press of sail, a tower of snowy canvas, silent as yet, her ports closed.

The rowers were bending wet backs to it, their masters flourishing canes over them. Chisholm, erect beside the tiller, could see the whole deadly apparatus of the wicked-looking craft—the central gangway that divided the eight benches, the steersman aft and the gun forward—as she slid down the hither side of a wave with the man-o'-war in close attendance, anxious to share the prize. That swivel was ready again, the gunner stooped behind his piece waiting for his sights to come on; when she lifted to the next swell he would fire. It was close, and horrible, and menacing. Grape at two hundred yards leaves little to chance. Was this to be the end of it? Life was strong and sweet within him; he had hoped—There! The two-decker was coming into it at last. A mere cable's-length astern of the galley by this time, she was luffing to bring her whole broadside to bear, no trusting to bow-chasers: this would end it. Her ports flew up, out ran the black muzzles of two tiers of guns. The young Scot found himself counting the moments. This was not just as he would have planned it. He longed to strike back. Furley, sinking lower, groaned once, and the boy never ceased his whimpering or took his eyes from the sails.

A roar—every porthole spouted flame, Chisholm felt the

hairs of his scalp creep; he caught his breath short, but not a plank started, not a rope was carried away, not a shot screamed over him. Amazed to find himself standing, he watched the smoke travel to leeward over the rainy sea hiding the galley. It passed. *Where was the galley?* Gone! but a stave or two was floating. What had happened? The tall two-decker was lying-to, was lowering boats.

"She's British after all!" he whispered, governing the break in his voice, and heard the crew, after a moment of breathless incredulity, rush aft to his assistance.

"What's that?" asked Furley, emerging from a spasm of agony mutely endured. "Sunk?—by the Rock guns? Are we that close in? Poor souls, may the Lord forgive 'em. . . . I dew. Yes, thankye, but 'twill spile thy coat"—he let Chisholm prop his shoulders—"I be shot through; keel an' garboard strake." A dozen garments were at his disposal, he was looking into the faces of sorrowing shipmates. "'The pains of death gat hold upon me,'" he muttered as the sweat broke upon corrugated brows and the ruined bulk of the great frame settled lower upon its uneasy couch. The eyelids rose, the lips parted, the glazing eyes turned towards the corpse of Sweetapple which men were covering with a blanket. Silent and grand he lay, the last of the Anointers of the Chilterns, that strange survival of seed dropped by some hunted Lollard. New centuries may bring novel formularies, but shall hardly restore us this. Austere and noble he lay, all that had seemed absurd, and trivial, and obscure harmonised and made reverend by death.

"He bin and got the start o' me. 'God bless him,' I'd say if 'tweren't prayin' for the dead. . . . But he ain't cold yit; and anyway, he got it a-helpin' o' me, so I'll risk it. Bos'n . . . Sammlle . . . take over the ship, will thee? . . . Hands forrard! Stand by.

"Friend Chis's'm, hear the Word o' the Lord to thee. Thee be a-wastin' o' thy time. There be a damsight tew much pride about thee, saith the Lord. . . . There's a hangin' back; and it tetches that there young gal o' ourn, Miss Susan. . . . Make up tew har, bor. . . quick-sticks, no tiffin'! She warnts thee; I kin sorter see it now. Up thee gits and gives me thy davy. *D'thee hear?*"

Chisholm did hear, though the voice was low and painfully produced. The lad's jaw set, his eye fixed. This appeal touched his pride, the enormous, silent pride of the self-contained, poor man. But the dying hero would take no denial.

"Will ye? . . . *won't ye?* . . . doan't kip a-thinkin' on yerself, *think about har!* . . . Yew'll make up tew har *now*, right orf?—aye?" he paused expectant.

"I wull, sae help me Cot!" said Chisholm, the oath drawn from him as by physical torture.

Both men kept silent for a while, oblivious of the proximity of the man who had taken over the tiller, and of the boy Titus, who knelt weeping dumbly, supporting the head of his dying friend. ("Let'm be," Furley had bidden when the acting master had ordered the child forward.)

"Git sail off of her," he muttered, unaware that this had been already done. The senses were dimming fast. "Wha's that?" he whispered huskily. It was the batteries along the curtain cheering the cattle-ship as she brought up off the Arsenal; lean, yellow men were in the embrasures and on the parapets, hurraing a welcome to British provender and to the men who had brought it at risk of life and limb, knowing nothing of what lay behind those shot-pitted stern-works.

The dying man listened and understood; the fast-ebbing blood ran warmly for a moment about that stout old heart.

"Good chaps, they shall ha' their beef! . . . And now, Lord, what wait I for?—My hope is in Thee. . . . Forrard, there! Make ready to anchor!—Let—go!" and, as his lips formed the syllables, the last which they were to utter, Thomas Furley, Captain under God of the brig *Mary of Yarmouth*, and sometime master gunner in the service of the Honourable East India Company, came in from his last voyage.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST

THE yard, garden, or, to give its own name, the *patio* of the little Spanish house in Prince Frederic Street went clambering away up the Rock in a series of ramps quarried out of the limestone. From terrace number one you looked into the first floor windows through a trellis overrun with major periwinkle and Provence rose. Terrace number two was level with the eaves of the house, whilst from the one above it you got a glimpse of shipping beyond the roofs below; and it was upon this platform, shaded by a pergola, darkened and cooled by the broad leaves of a citron, that Justin was sitting to take the air upon the afternoon of the day following the return of the *Mary of Yarmouth*.

Three months had slipped away, autumn had come, but the day was oppressively close, hot with the African heat of southern Spain, tempered by the proximity of the ocean. The breeze from off the Atlantic had died away; the rain had stopped, but a warm, steamy mist travelled low over sea and land, constantly absorbed by the dry soil, and constantly renewed from the sea, through which the upper ranges of the Rock jutted into scorching sunshine. The heat up there was terrible, men at Willis's almost fainted as they stood. The sergeant at Rock-gun Battery, who ordinarily could overlook the Spanish lines, so that not a picket was set without his knowledge, could see nought but the level bank of white cloud three hundred feet below him, whilst the men at the Signal Station might as well have been in the cool depths of St. Michael's Cavern for all they could report.

Nor were the enemy in better case. For ought the besiegers knew, a British convoy might be rounding Cabrita Point with supplies for the hard-pressed garrison.

Heat, inaction, suspense, and not a stroke struck by either side! Guess what chagrins, what heart-eatings and vile tempers did these conditions engender among hot-blooded, brave men thirsting for glory. Many nails were bitten short,

but none nearer to the quick than those of General Mendoza, captain-general of the Spanish army of observation.

The Rock had been wrenched from the hold of Spain some seventy years before ; the wound was yet raw, and Mendoza, like every man of his race then and since, yearned to restore this lost jewel to his master's crown ; a jewel which he felt to the marrow of his bones had been won by a fluke and retained by fraud. (Respect the point of view, O my countrymen ! Would it not have been yours if, by the chances of European politics, Dover had been occupied by the Germans in 1832, acting as the agents of a reactionary coalition, and stuck to ever since, in spite of Royal promises of restitution which an insolent Reichstag refused to ratify ? Read English for German and House of Commons for Reichstag, and you have the situation in a nutshell.)

It could be done by hard fighting. How else ? And was he not there to fight ? Yet, for want of orders he must bite his fingers, watching the British lines being strengthened day by day.

Men he asked for, and more men. Slowly they arrived, so slowly ! For his royal master having issued his ultimatum in volume form, was making war by monthly numbers. Worse ; private advices apprised Mendoza that he was to be superseded ; that the long-promised reinforcements would be entrusted to some titled grandee of the first class, and the memorable, the final blow would be struck by another.

By another ! The renown that he coveted, the prize that he yearned to clutch, were never to be his ; his pains and preparations must go for worse than naught, would swell the reputation of a rival, a Court favourite, some silken warrior who had never set a squadron in the field, nor the division of a battle knew more than a spinster ! Neither were especial inducements wanting. His spies and British deserters agreed that one of the German regiments was disloyal. It would throw down its arms at a summons. Its position was noted.

What does your full-blooded, jealous commander do under such circumstances ?

And still the hot, white October mist lay thick across the isthmus.

And on that very afternoon our friend the Colonel, now in the last days of an impatient convalescence, was holding his little court beneath the citron pergola. The place was quiet and most private, for of the storerooms which enclosed both sides of the *patio*, the summer-house at the top of the last terrace and the little dwelling-house at the bottom, every

room opened inward, and those which were not stuffed with provision and wood for the siege were occupied by the three women and their maid.

The officers' mess of the 12th had asked leave to tender personal congratulations to the new commandant upon his completed recovery and, incidentally, to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Hollinghurst the bride-elect.

Not to be burdensome, they would come two at a time.

Their ex-Lieut.-Colonel (Brigadier-General now), the gallant Trigge, led the way, accompanied by Major Tulkinghorne, Justin's late colleague and present subordinate.

The men were antithetics; the Brigadier stout, short, abrupt, dogmatically orthodox, discharging pious platitudes at suitable intervals, sitting his chair with the solid rotundity and squat erectness with which a cedar-cone sits its branch. His colleague was long in person, limp in posture, and prone to the enunciation of futile profanities in an exhausted undertone; a bore who believed himself a philosopher.

But, behind the ostensible reasons for the call, a secret and reasonable curiosity possessed the minds of both.

This Justin, this new-comer, was an enigma alike to the zealot and the rationalist. At his first joining, the man's prim reticence had conveyed an impression of inadequacy which his adroit courage on the occasion of the drunken mess-waiter's outbreak had only partially dissipated—so hardy a growth is first prejudice when substantiated by a deceptively dapper exterior.

Yet week by week the aura of fine character which environed the man had radiated influence. The plain preference of His Excellency had assisted, a preference to which the Sovereign had set his august seal.

Then, after a week of tragic eclipse, the Colonel had emerged effulgent, scintillating, a monument of resolution and endurance.

How had he achieved it? The feat had been discussed at all the messes; every officer in the garrison had his theory; the two callers had theirs.

"Overruling Providence: there's no other name for it, sir!" remarked Trigge, with a challenging side-glance at his comrade. "Here is Tulkinghorne going to call it something else—wants to know what ye were thinking about all that week; what kept ye up, and so on. Simplest thing in the world, I say—Will of the Almighty. Once admit that, and there ye are"—a second glance. "Look at me, now! Thirty-five years ago come Good Friday I was two steps up the first ladder we fixed against the west epaulement of Schatzheim. Little Tucker, a fellow sub, a brave man, sir, but jealous,

shouldered me off my foothold in the abruptest manner (most rudely, I must say) and took my place. But see what followed. Next moment a ball passed through his brain—his head, sir, exactly where mine had been the moment before. And yet"—darting another glance at Tulkinghorne—"there are some who will say there is no such thing as an Over-ruling Providence."

The gallant Trigge, having discharged his shot, glanced around him triumphantly.

Tulkinghorne, after a pause of sufficient duration to beguile his comrade into a premature conceit of victory, uncrossed a pair of thin legs and sighed.

"Stwike me blind, General, but I'm sawy, vewy sawy, not to agwee with ye. 'Tis this way—curse me! how shall I put it? Heah, Justin, ye shall put it faw me. Ye know what I'm dwivin' at; we always did think alike."

But their host lifted deprecating hands, and the bore of the mess maundered on, feeling his way to his meaning unhelped.

"'Tis like this. Twigge is a Chwistian—glories in it."

"I do, sir," assented the General, prompt as a shot.

"I ain't," drawled the other. "But then, I'm none of your Voltaireans. I'm not for Berkeley; I'm not for Hume. No; I ain't a what-ye-may-call-'em, and I'm not a thingummy. I'm just for Luck. We've each of us got to die once, but how and when is fixed——"

"There I'm with ye, sir. Predestination," broke in Trigge, but Tulkinghorne held the floor.

"Just so. We all see alike. Sensible men all same weligion, ye know. Well now, Justin and myself will die in our beds, that's plain. The General, too, vewy likely—*most* likely," for the little warrior was purpling. "In fact, if 'twas a mattah faw a wagah I'd back him to dwah his last bweath between a payah of sheets. . . . As for ye, Colonel, nothin' can kill ye. Lead is no good to ye. . . . Niggahs and Fwench have been twyin' faw twenty yeahs. Poor Boyle twied, yet, heah ye are! . . . I am made same way. Not superstitious, ye know; devil a bit! No, there's nothin' of that sort about me. But, all the same, while I cawwy an aggerly bead in my snuff-box——"

"Stuff!" interposed Trigge hotly.

"—But then," continued the man who had emancipated himself from every form of superstition, "with the finest luck in the world in action, I'm the unluckiest devil livin' at cards; yes, 'tis all taken out of me at whist."

"Then, why play?" asked Justin.

"What a qwestion! But, theah again, I am on the mend. . . . When the Jews were sent packin' one of 'em sold me a

signet-wing monstwous cheap—he had wefused better bids fwom the men in the Hardenbergs earlier. 'Twas poor Von Toppler's—see the hands and dice?—the blazon of his house?" He displayed the bezel. "Lucky at play, all of 'em (so they tell me). He dealt himself a hand of thirteen twumps the night befoah he went out with Stedman of ours. Yaas, I wathah flattah myself I've changed my luck."

Justin listened with a well-bred show of interest, but Trigge, whose under-breath comments were growingly audible, boiled over with a "Blanked heathenism!" and, arising impetuously, took his leave. The Major got to his feet more slowly: there was a note of disappointment in the voices of both: they declined more wine.

At the top of the flight of steps they paused. "Seven mortal days!" said the Brigadier, holding his host's hand, and almost unconsciously continuing some unspoken soliloquy.

"A h—l of a time," remarked Tulkinghorne. "What the doose were ye thinkin' about all the while? Ye must have been thinkin' of somethin'. What kept ye goin'? Ye know what I mean."

"He put his trust in the Almighty," asserted Trigge.

"He backed his luck," said the Major.

Justin glanced from one to the other and divined that the men had discussed him elsewhere. The hospitality of his mien suffered no eclipse, but he smilingly withdrew within his defences and the drawbridge rose. ("My secret is my own.")

"I suppose I was thirsty . . . yes . . . there were days when I could have done with a little something to drink," he smiled. "Want of food did not trouble me as much as ye'd suppose . . . but the cramps—!" he smiled wistfully again, recent additions to the crowsfeet puckering, observant eyes which perceived that these importunate acquaintances were not concerned with physical experiences. "Oh, what kept me up? what gave me warrant for holding out? Let me see. Shall we say a feeling that there was some work left in me, and a few things that needed doing?"

The visitors took their leave, passing in the *patio* Sue, who had attended the seaman's funeral escorted by Chisholm. The girl, red-eyed and pensive, turned aside to her room. The youth escorted the callers to the street door and returned to Colonel Justin upon the upper terrace, and a grave and preoccupied youth was he.

"A military funeral? The Governor ordered it? I ought to have been present. Did all go well?"

"'Twass fine, sir. The strangest ceremony. When the chaplain wass through, the *Mary's* company conduckit their

ain sairvice. There's some nicht lichtly it for mummary; but I ken them weel. To see the dour, clenched een o' them, the knit broos! And to hear the twa-three prayers; the gaspingest prayers ye ever listened till, rippit clean frae the hert! Some grat. Boy Titus grat awfu'. Yet the auld skipper wass something stern wi' the laddie."

"Good fellows—God rest their souls!" muttered Justin, capping as he breathed his prayer. "And Susan was there, so?"

"Ay, sir, juist sae, in her Quaker claes. She wad wear naething but what Maister Furley had brocht aboard for her at her sailing. Let them follow the mode that are modish: she went in her saft, sea-gray frock and yon white shawlie, neckercher thing, and, on ma sawl, Colonel, masel', that walked beside her, thocht ilka meenut she wad rise and flee awa—an angel, sir! And, Lord, hoo she grat! The big tears wass rinning down her bonnie cheeks. I felt—I felt——"

"You felt?" inquired the Colonel quietly, after an interval, during which the youth failed to complete his sentence.

"Sir, I am a puir man, as ye ken vara weel."

"There is nothing new in that, John. I am waiting——"

"Colonel, if it wass not that I took ma aith tae good Maister Furley as he lay deen' that I wad dae it (he made me tak' it)——"

"Yes, John——"

"Sir, I am nae adventurer, nor a fortune-hunter, nor——"

"You and I know that, John. What news have ye for me, my boy?"

"Oh, Colonel, Colonel! I luv her; ay, the vara moulds she sets her little fit upo'—I canna help it!" The poor lad was almost sobbing, so terrible was the contest of duty and love with the pride that possessed him.

"And why, in God's name, John, should ye wish 'to help it'? Fetch Sue."

The lad leaped to his feet, but it seemed there was no need for him to stir. Sue, light-footed, shading her head with a white kerchief from the heat which seemed to thrid the mist, was tripping up the rock-hewn steps of the lower terrace. Behind her came more slowly, and talking as he came, a great, gaunt, square-shouldered elder, whose face, hidden by the peak of the cap he wore, seemed set in a bush of white hair. The man took good heed to his footing, bending over his feet and tapping the rock with a mighty hand-staff of carven teak; his gruff voice preceded him.

"Tell him an auld frien' o' his, ma'am. Ian Chisholm o' the Ca Bartolomé. He'll ken, nae fear! Ou, ay, I am followin' ye."

The Colonel started and half arose. "Is it possible?" Sue, looking more brilliantly well, and, despite recent grief for a lost friend, happier than we have ever known her, approached, announcing the visitor.

"A gentleman to see you, Colonel, from Madras."

She stood aside, smiling, whilst Justin, with a quick, joyous laugh, almost dragged his old friend up the last two steps by both hands. Each man pelted his comrade with questions; both laughed loudly, absurdly; it was boyish, it was delightful—to themselves.

To young Chisholm it was merely a deplorably inopportune interruption. His clouded face caught Sue's eye, she smiled meaningly; was it a challenge? She had been softly happy that day, its melancholy business notwithstanding. Whilst weeping beside the grave she had felt an inner current of joy running strongly within for that Another was at her side: Another, who had inexplicably held aloof of late. He had said nothing yet, but there was a something in his manner which told her of what was coming. She divined his trouble; and had not Dray, her dear old Dray, hinted at his friend's scruples?

It was a golden moment all round. The woman rose to the height of the occasion, and the lad, slow in the uptake though he might be, saw his opportunity clear and near, and seized it.

The lovers faded off the scene, sauntering down the Rock steps in the direction of the house, admiring this patch of periwinkle and that spray of rose. Nor, think you, was it in the hearts of Mrs. Lamb or of Julia to spoil sport. They effaced themselves; it might have been a house of the dead when the pair of youngsters crossed its threshold. This small sitting-room and that cool, dusk parlour were open, empty, and fully at their service.

"Some friend of his Indian days," murmured the girl, and had almost given the name, but the man was impatient to be getting to their own matters. "A Scotsman, I jalouse; there sis mony o' my fowk in the East. He maun ha'e come by that fule Indiaman wha held her fire sae lang. They say their forward battery wass buried in cargo, and they could only trust their gunners at point-blank range—the mair shame till them! Their lubberliness cost guid men's lives!"

The man was talking against time. Nor would the woman help him out by a casual "True, indeed; yes!" When he had done scolding the bad sea-manners of the ship to whose belated intervention he probably owed his life, a silence fell between them.

"Susan," he groaned at length, "what maun I say? I

wasna a maitch for ye when ye wass as puir as masel', and the noo that ye are a gran' leddy——"

"Not another word, John! of that sort, I mean," she cried in a heat of indignation; but the man persisted, so bitter was his pride.

"But, 'tis Cot's truth!—I——" But he must stop, for a soft hand was laid over his mouth. He kissed it and threw up his chin, striving for speech. "Aweel, then, there's naething I can say but juist the ordinar' 'Lassie, I luve ye!'"

"And what more than that did I want to hear, John?" She was weeping the happiest tears; he watched her in a mighty awe. Was it done, then? and himself crowned? her accepted lover? She spoke again. "Oh, to think—to think of it! I believe I have been loving you all the time; yes, from the first day, John! You remember the inn at St. Albans (was it not?) where ye set a stool for my feet? And that night under the lamp by Charing Cross? And that bitter cold day in the Park? I must have dropped and died before night but for your guinea, John."

There, then, these two honest young hearts sate in a wonderful new world of their own creation, a private Eden Bower, and in their innocence imagined that not a living soul save themselves knew ought of their loves, whereas that motherly and much-experienced creature, Mrs. Lamb, and Julia, a betrothed woman herself of three months' standing, were hugging one another overhead in pure joy and sympathy. Such are the ways of women.

Nay, Painter, the staid and self-respecting Painter, was in the secret, and had gone so far as to communicate her version of the facts to Private Noakes, the Colonel's batman, or bearer, as he usually called him from long habit; a tall infantryman of an extreme cleanliness and taciturnity, who still followed his master from house to house like a big dog, albeit no longer permitted to offer him the support of his arm.

Meanwhile the two old friends beneath the citron pergola were enjoying a glorious crack: Presidency news for the most part, the fall of Fletcher, the amazing success of Rumbold and Stuart. The old Scot was the chief speaker.

"Hoo I fand ye? Man, Justin, ye're o'er-modest! Why, ilka ither man on the Rock iss crackin' o' ye; the adveentures o' Colonel Justin are the talk o' the hale garrison. Nayterally, I thocht the name soonded fameeliar, and cam' a step or twa oot o' ma way tae see if it wass na ma auld frien'. Man, ye've had an awfu' time on't. For that budmash, the ither—he's deid; I'll say na mair! But, praise the Lor'rd, ye're

luiking juist fine yersel'. And, did ye find yer wards, they Travis bairnies ? ”

“ No, indeed, that I did not ; but after I had run against them blindfold twice or thrice, Heaven grew weary of my stupidity and pushed them both into my hands. Small credit to me, old friend. I am a fool ; there's no other word for it ! ”

“ I wad like fine to belt the chiel thot wad pit thot wor'rd upo' ye ! Though to gae till yer auld enemy's bungalow un-aimed as ye did, wass a fule's errand, and I'll say it, gin I wass a deein' man ! ” chuckled the ancient Scot, shaking his teak walking-stick. “ Aha ! an' ye still cairry th' auld mull ! ” He took a copious pinch from the ewe's horn, once his own. “ An' ha'e ye still that wee dirkie o' mine, the *skene dhu* ? Ye have yet to find a man o' ma name, I doot.”

The Colonel sat up laughing, and smote his thigh. “ Your name—your name ! ” He laughed again. “ Indeed, I am *ulukabatcha*, the very son of an owl. Why, man, the young gentleman who was with me when ye came up those steps half an hour since is a Chisholm, but whether of your stock or not, who knows ? I have the knife somewhere, but had forgot it. Let us ask the fellow what he knows of his family.”

So Eden Bower was invaded all too soon for the lovers ; there were steps upon the stones of the *patio*, and a deep-toned northern voice in converse with the Colonel.

“ ——— of Sutherland, ye say ? —No of Shinside ? 'Tis barely po-sible.”

“ John, my boy, we want ye.” It was the Colonel speaking. The Ensign, holding Sue's hand in the first bliss of betrothal, released it and came forth. The great white-headed stranger faced him with an exploring eye, which the lad met with the reserved, unsmiling courtesy of a man of a fighting race.

“ Mister Chisholm, your sairvant, sir ! ” said the visitor uncovering, and not waiting for his host's introduction, “ I haf the honour to bear your name, sir, a name something by-ordinar ; it iss no' ilka day that a man shall be meeting wi' a Chisholm, even gin he live north of the hielan' line. We are a sma' clan, and sud be acquent. I, masel', am of the Chisholms of Kinloch Shin ; *and by the Lor'rd that made us baith, sae's yersel' !* ” The laborious politeness of the preamble ended in a breathless rush of words, as the old man strode forward and caught the astonished youth by the shoulders. “ Dinna tell me,” he cried, “ 'Tis ma brither's face, his neb, his mou, his een. I kent ye by yer smile ! Lauch again—aye, again ! Man, we are kin, or the teffle iss in it ! Hoo is Munro ? Hoo iss Alastair and Tonal Beg ? Hoo iss Hector ? Wha hass Overskaig, and wha hass the wee housie in Corrie

Kinloch ? Ah, canna ye spik, mon ? Dinna ye ken that aw'm deein' for news o' ma auld hame ? ”

The excitement of the old man, the tremble in his voice, was electric. The lad, who had stood close-lipped and wondering whilst the names of long-dead great-uncles were tossed at him (two in Canada, and one beneath the sods of Culloden), flushed and sparkled at the place-names of his boyhood. Both men burst into a torrent of simultaneous Gaelic, the elder holding the younger by the elbows and rocking him backward and forward as he addressed him in the energies of recognition.

“Major, ma frien' (Colonel, a wad say), and you leddies,” he cried, reverting to the English and including the circle of listeners, whom the strength of his joy had drawn to the spot, “this iss a great day for me. I haf the wor'rd of my people efter thretty-five years. This iss ta oie o' ma brither Hector, our chief. (Iss he na chief the day, Ian ?) Aye, chief o' ta Chisholm. Hector will be wearin' ta three eggle's feathers at Overskaig—to think on't ! ” Another burst of the Gaelic.

He paused at last, the great white bush of beard quivering with joyful emotion, and in the moment of silence that followed a clap of thunder rattled, and every window shook and every wall vibrated.

Justin, still smiling, turned to Julia without haste or composure, his old brisk brightness mellowed by some touch of additional gentleness.

“You ladies will excuse us men for a while. My old friend Mr. Chisholm, whom I have not yet had the pleasure of formally presenting to you, Julia (my affianced wife, Chisholm), will be taking a little walk with John. By their leave I go with them.”

“Not many steps, Wade, with a storm brewing. You have no cloak, my love. What, again !—a very long peal ! How it shakes the glass ! Did any of you see the flash ? Why take your sword, dear ? it only tires you. (There it goes again ! Oh-h-h !) Why not keep under shelter until it be over ? ”

The men had reached the street ; they turned, smiling upon the ladies, still uncovered.

“I cannot see which way the clouds move,” said Julia, peering up from under her hand. “It is thick, but not dark. Don't take him far from shelter, John ; something will be falling, and the storms on the Rock are heavy while they last.”

Then came a hurtling above the roofs, something struck ; there was the rumble of falling stonework and a cloud of white dust, and again and again the thunder rolled and something

pitched into the soft ploughed-up earth of the narrow street, a matter of twenty yards away. Far off they heard a drum beat and bugles woke and called.

The women's mouths and eyes rounded with comprehension. It was one of those appalling moments, inevitable, endless, which must surely leave its scar upon the brain. Sue looked upon John, but as quickly turned her head.

Julia sprang to the side of Justin, and clung there, mutely agonising. He gently strove to disengage her hands, but she refixed them as fast. The clutch grew convulsive. Again the bugles called, yet Justin, in his extremity, possessed himself in smiling patience. There would be time enough for everything, even for this.

"My love will be brave for her soldier's sake," he murmured. "She would not have him stay with her now. He could not love ye so well, dear, if he did not love his duty better!"

Julia Hollinghurst was no heroine, being merely a piece of loving womanhood, she could not, upon the point of so sudden an emergency, rise to the height of the man of her heart. Her grasp tightened. Still smiling gravely, the Colonel turned to Sue (Mrs. Lamb was helplessly exclamatory, and Painter's head under her apron). It was the girl who intervened, white to the lips herself, and not daring to meet the eye of her lover, she laid her cold hands over the rigid fingers of her friend. At her touch, and at the infection of her silent courage, the finer nature of the other reasserted itself.

"Wade, forgive me! I will be worthy of you, but—— Oh! No! I will *not* faint!" Her hand pressed her side.

"Get her in. . . . Get her to work . . . to use her hands. Lint, bandages; you have linen?"

Susan nodded dumbly and almost bore her friend into the house, and again through the thick air came the clear, cruel, inhuman bugles.

The men turned their faces towards the lines. "May I offer ye ma air'rm, Colonel?" asked young Chisholm.

"Ye may, my boy; 'tis no time to stand upon punctilios. I shall want all my breath and both my legs this afternoon. Here comes the first enemy. Right about face, doctor, and follow us to the front. Not a word, sir. Ye have done your duty in protesting: mine takes me to my regiment, where I fancy we shall both of us be wanted."

Whilst speaking he was pressing on, a Chisholm upon either side of him. "Old friend, we part here: I must not take you under fire."

"Dinna talk tae me, Justin; I'm for the M'Leods wi' my clansman here." As he spoke there came flying steps behind them, and Susan's hand was upon her lover's arm.

"John, don't look at me, don't speak; take this with ye, my love. . . . Oh, my love!" She unwound a black riband from her hair whilst speaking, laid it in his hand, and would have gone as she had come, but the lad, white about the nostrils, hard bright eyes in a set face, caught and kissed her with never a word. Susan shook the thick hair over her eyes and sped back to the house.

"Ta caillach! Man, John, ye haf chosen the richt wife for a Chisholm!" muttered the old Highlandman as the youth dropped a pace behind.

"Auld frien', a wor'rd i' yer lug: yon lad is——?"

"One of the best—the very best. I owe my life to him."

"An' whit way hass he cairrit himsel' under fire?"

"That he will show to-day, but I've no doubts," replied Justin, knowing nothing of ship experiences of which John had not spoken.

"And the lassie?" persisted old Chisholm.

"A noble creature—all her mother. She loves him. But she's rich. 'Tis her share in that cursed Bexwara loot that has kept them apart until to-day. John is bitter proud."

"That is ta bluid. . . . A toom sporran 'tis masel' can mak' richt. . . . Wheesht!" The lad was agin at Justin's elbow.

The guns had ceased, for the artillerymen could see nothing, and the heads of the storming columns would be well upon their ways. Battle was indeed already joined, the rattle of musketry was incessant, now at Forbes's Barrier, now at the Land Port, which the laddermen were to attack, for it was escalate or nothing.

Mendoza, laying his plans for a night assault, had been tempted by the fog to anticipate. With infinite precaution as to silence, he had brought every available man to the outpost line and had flung them against the hitherto impregnable defences of the North Front, trusting to luck and to the singular weather which had permitted him to order his battle unseen by the English lookouts, and which he hoped would allow him to cross the zone of fire unscathed, and give him all the advantages of a surprise.

One work alone he spared, the Queen's Lines, which deserters informed him were held by the Hardenbergs, who would exchange sides when summoned by a regiment of Catholic Badeners in Spanish pay.

The scheme was a bold one, for anything in the nature of manœuvring is impossible upon a narrow isthmus, ankle-deep in sand and swept by a powerful artillery. What the Spanish

Commander could do he did, and did according to rule. He would have three columns of attack, right, centre, and left, of which the last, whilst the two others were well engaged, and the hands of the enemy full, was to enter the defences by leave of the disaffected Hanoverians, take the defenders of the British positions in the rear, and throw open the Land Port gate to Spain.

The plan was well conceived—such things have succeeded, and this might. But the fog which justified the enterprise ruined its execution.

The Walloon officer who led the forlorn hope of laddersmen had the pitiful luck to drop and tread upon his compass whilst clearing the glacis of Fort San Philip, after which mishap he steered by guess, and bearing too far to his left (to avoid the western beach), found himself crossing the front of the Badeners as they issued from the barrier at the head of the Boyau in the middle of the Spanish position. There was a hasty challenge in German and an unintelligible reply in French, a musket went off, and all the advantages of surprise were lost.

Then the guns along the Spanish lines opened; and being trained high to avoid demoralising the stormers, did the English works no manner of harm, whilst plumping round shot into the Alamèda, two miles away, and oversetting a chimney in Prince Frederic Street.

Such are the chances of war.

Meanwhile a Catalan regiment, debouching from Fort Santa Barbara on the extreme Spanish left, crossed the neutral ground at the double, fell upon the picket at Forbes's Barrier and carried it without firing a shot. The men holding the post threw down their arms, but were bayoneted, shrieking unintelligible protests. They were Hardenbergs, whom the Governor, ignorant of the intended treachery, had posted there in the course of the morning, in relief of De la Motte's regiment.

The butchery of these unlucky traitors being witnessed by their fellows in the Queen's Lines above and to the right, filled them with fury; cursing the breakers of the pact, they opened fire upon the Catalans, who, undismayed, and expectant of nothing less, scaled the scarp in their grass sandals and broke in over the parapet with extraordinary gallantry. Here the Germans, being of two parties, some initiated, but daunted by the fate of the picket, others loyal but ill-led, gave way and were breaking, when down upon the victors poured the left wing of the 12th from the Prince's Lines above. The gorge of the covered way by which they came to the rescue of their old enemies was constricted, and it was

here that the major in command and two captains fell whilst deploying their men. (Yes, Tulkinghorne had changed his luck.) It was there too that Travis, his guns at Europa Point left to the care of artillerymen, struck in for his regiment and made and took his mark. Hurt in three places, he reformed his men and led them again and again to the attack.

By what means, ask you? remembering that this was a studious youth in his first engagement. Not, be sure, by impassioned appeal to a glorious British Liberty (which no poor man then enjoyed), or to memories of wife and child (whom many of his followers had enlisted to escape). No, for the Comic Spirit willed otherwise. . . . "Twelfth!" bawled our youngster, at his wits' end for a sanction for valour which he knew must be awaiting the right word—"Twelfth—will you, who eat *beef*, turn tail to these (unmentionables) who suck *oranges*?"

And lo, the right chord had been touched, the gallant Twelfth responded with its ancient ardour, and those intrusive Catalans were shifted, and a name made.

But the bicker was of the bitterest, for the Badeners, having apologised and disentangled themselves from the Walloons, were pouring up the glacis, and the Hanoverians and English, being clubbed and losing their formations, gave ground, fighting in groups under the leadership of any high-spirited and conspicuous officer or man of either race, and using the butt from preference lest their bullets should find a friend. To most of the privates and subalterns it was a first battle, a trying experience for young troops; an Inkerman antedated by three quarters of a century. But England had there a man who was no young soldier, to whom no turn of the game came amiss, and whose bright, smiling composure no chance or change of the face of battle could disturb. Colonel Wade Justin, staking everything upon one brilliant stroke, left his lines above to the honour of a single company, and, leading his right wing to the lower works, broke fiercely in upon the right of the victorious Badeners, checking their attack. Here the fighting was very close and desperate, for as the combatants were of three races, and German words of command sounded upon both sides, no quarter was given. The original fog was thickened by smoke; none could tell how the matter was going, not Eliott with his reserves beneath the Castle, nor Justin cheerfully and politely directing the counter-attack in the smoke below. 'Twas a soldier's battle; the guns were mute since the opening cannonade. Artillerymen whose pieces could not be sufficiently depressed to meet the rush of the stormers replied with round-shot to the hand-grenades, or struck with the rammer,

Then, who knows when, or for what reason? the attack weakened. The remains of the Walloon storming-party drew off by the beach; they had never been menacing; the causeway was impassable, and the inundation had not been crossed. The Scots defending the Land Port sallied, led by Lieut.-Col. Mackenzie, and, taking the Spanish centre in flank, completed the discomfiture begun by Justin. In twenty minutes the affair was over so far as danger to England's fortress was concerned, but the Highlanders, getting out of hand, pushed the counter-stroke to extremes and drove mixed crowds of Badeners, Walloons, and Catalans upon their Spanish supports, until the whole mass fell back across the isthmus as far as the eastern beach, where, in the neighbourhood of the Devil's Tower, a fierce little battle was fought and many wounds taken and given, and some prisoners left in Scottish hands.

Is this clear? I can hardly hope to make it so; it was very far from clear to the men engaged; nor did any two reports subsequently agree. Precisely what the Highlanders were doing (beyond getting a belly-full of "ta fechting") they neither knew nor cared. Over that square half-mile of sand men of six races, and of at least as many mutually unintelligible tongues, fought in the hot obscurity of an autumn sea-fog, whilst bugles from both sides vainly sounded the recall, and watchers from the upper lines looked down into a sea of white, sunlit, ever-shifting mist, constantly thinning, constantly renewed, and saw nothing of the fight below, the sounds of which came up to them sharp and clear.

Yes, the bugles were blown but in vain, as it seemed. These clansmen were young soldiers with a tradition of their own as to how a matter of this kind should be managed. It was but a little more than thirty years since their fathers had broken the best English infantry and made Johnnie Cope's dragoons scamper for their lives.

It was upon the cards that had they been adequately led and well backed they would have carried San Roque and burnt the Spanish camp.

Or, and this too was upon the cards, they might have dispersed to plunder and been cut up in detail by Mendoza's reserve, supposing the Capitan General to have kept such a force in hand.

Wise Elliott would take no risks. His first duty was to hold his post, not to occupy territory which he could not retain, so his bugles blew, and blew, and the mainguard at the Land Port waited, peering out into the fog along the causeway for the return of those desperadoes.

And at Forbes's Barrier, where the fighting was over, a

grand reconciliation was in progress between the men of the 12th and their former enemies, the Hardenbergs. 'Twas spontaneous: the moment was golden, propitious; the hoarded hates of years were gone as though such feelings had never been, lost in the delicious sense of mutual respect that springs in the martial bosoms of men who have shared the same danger and come through. Both corps had suffered somewhat heavily, but with a difference. Of the two suborned companies of Hanoverians, a full half lay dead after a surrender so pusillanimous as to deprive their subsequent massacre of half its horror and all sympathy. Their misconduct had been inexplicable—to those not in the secret, and the survivors naturally refrained from supplying the clue. Thank Heaven, the English had seen nothing!

One officer of the recreant company had indeed fallen gloriously. A certain Ensign Scrivener, an Englishman, hitherto of small account with his mess, and under suspicion of late, he, knowing scarce a dozen words of the language of the men whom he commanded, and who had betrayed him, and still less of the speech of those Catalans under whose bayonets he died, caught unaware, and carried beyond himself by passion, had offered a desperate resistance, and lay dead with twenty honourable wounds in him.

Months later my Lord Duddingstone would learn the last news of his son with motions of inward wonder, tears of paternal pity, sorrow, regrets, and, withal, promptings of secret relief! 'Twas marvellous unlike the boy: God rest his soul! He might have lived longer and ended worse. After all, the family character had saved him at the last: there had been good stuff in the prodigal. My lord's bosom swelled, his eyes overflowed, he, even he, had begotten a warrior, had found a man for his country. There should be such a monument in Duddingstone church! rare Italian marbles, none of your gray Sicilian, nor dusky-buff Veronese, but *Giallo antico* relieved by *Pavonazzo* and black basalt (but no *rosso*, it stinks in wet weather), Oh, the finest of marbles! And a trophy of arms in bronze, with rippled ribands and swags of foliage in the taste of the late renaissance, with a bust, should it be? or a medallion? Not a medallion: poor Fred's nose turned up—the Horrocks nose—a bust, then, above, upon a classic altar, caressed by a mourning father (himself) chapleting the brows of the youthful hero with laurels with one hand, whilst half-veiling his own face with the other; and—and, let him see—should not Britannia?—yes, assuredly it should be Britannia, or the muse of History, stylus in hand, inscribe a shield with *Scrivener, Gibraltar*, and some appropriate tag, *dulce et decorum, etc.* (more tears). And the inscription, ah yes, the inscription,

terse, sonorous, of unimpeachable latinity that even Walpole could find no flaw in.

So passes the Honourable Fred Scrivener, fortunate in the moment and in the manner of his death. Good-bye to thee, Fred ! And farewell, my lord ! Desolate, disappointed old heart, thou art not the first, nor shalt thou be the last, to weave a noble legend about the memory of a thoroughly unsatisfactory son.

But we must back to the English lines, where our Colonel, keen, timely, and quietly efficient as ever, having despatched Travis to the Governor with news of the complete success of his movement, and with absolute orders not to return before looking in upon the ladies, and having his hurts seen to and rebandaged, our Colonel, I say, was everywhere, solacing the chagrins of the Badener officers left in British hands, and, since he had not the pleasure and honour of being able to address to them his condolences and compliments in their own tongue, calling in the assistance of the Hanoverian colonel, with whom he exchanged snuff-boxes upon the strength of a victory, the chief honours of which he ascribed to Hardenberg staunchness. (Bows, and more bows, and yet more bows !) The example was contagious, 'twas a "general post" of snuff-boxes : the two messes fraternised upon the spot, and remained good friends until the end of the siege.

And the women ? How shall one bring home to a sheltered people the lot of women who must live through a battle-day within sound of the guns ? Did those minutes go swiftly, think you ? Was there any keeping one's thoughts to the work in hand ? Come now, have you, my reader, ever lived through any remotely similar experience ? Has it fallen to you to sit upon the stairs, hunched, sick, breathless, through endless minutes, whilst the surgeons were busy behind the door across the landing ? Aye ? you have ? Then you, at least, can realise the anguish of that hour, the miserable physical distress of it, the searing pains across the forehead, the pressure upon the nape, the weight upon the heart that no sighing will heave off.

Susan took command, and kept them at it. The rooms vibrated to the screech of torn linen ; she chattered, scolded, laughed, urged, sang, talked incessantly, cheerfully, working and making the rest work. How much longer could she keep this up ? She marvelled at herself, her insensibility, her hardness of heart.

Was that a knock ? The guns had done firing, but the musketry still flickered, died down, and broke out afresh. Surely some one was at the door ? None dared to suggest

such a thing. They looked askance at one another. It came again. Susan flew. Her brother was there, begrimed, be-blooded, smiling, a kind word of the Governor's still glowing in his heart. "Old girl, we've beat them!" he said, not loudly, for he was near the end of his tether. "Oh, Dray, you are hurt——" The passage behind his sister seemed to fill with women. "The Colonel isn't touched," he assured them, and saw Mrs. Hollinghurst toss up her hands and go down as if shot.

"I say—I say!" he muttered, leaning heavily against the jamb.

"Oh, let her be! She will take no harm! Sue, see to your brother," whispered Mrs. Lamb, hurrying forward.

And so Susan was mercifully carried over the next half hour.

And what of young Chisholm? Having given his arm to the Colonel as far as the Prince's Lines, he had flown to rejoin his own corps at the Land Port and waited with mute impatience for the escalade which, as we know, was never pushed. When, later, a sally was permitted, his company was not among the three which were held in reserve, and his opportunity had come.

There are moments in our lives of spiritual and physical exaltation when the man is above himself, capable not merely of attempting, but of effecting the impossible. On such an occasion spirit and flesh are in as perfect accord as a fearless rider and a bold horse, before whose onset the impervious and the insurmountable sunders, yields, and flies behind. A man thus uplifted will never lack followers whose imaginations take fire from his, and are temporarily obsessed by his personality. Among the forty and odd commissioned officers of Lord M'Leod's regiment there was not a man who was not a-tiptoe for the onset. What faces! bloodless, curbed, gravely smiling as to the lips, and as to the eyes, jewel-bright, jewel-hard. Every man of them all was perfectly certain that this was his own particular day, but one among them, unknown to his fellows, wore enchanted armour, a girl's riband and a girl's heart, and felt himself immune to steel and bullet. This hour should make him; he would rise to the height of the love with which his lady had crowned him.

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Outside the drawbridge of the Land Port gate, upon the crown of the causeway which spans the flooded meadow, peering out into the fog, was old Ian Chisholm. With feet set well apart, and a bush of white beard hanging down over hands crossed upon the crook of his great teak walking-stick,

he stood, scrutinising impatiently the parties of M'Leod's men returning to their bugles. For a time a continuous stream of Scottish lads poured past him on either side, chattering joyously in the Gaelic over sporrans heavy with the miscellaneous spoils of a stricken field. Some shepherded silent prisoners, some strode by with drawn faces enduring the smart of wounds.

When the stream of sound men slackened, came lame men helped or carried. Last came the dead, borne in a pathetic silence.

The watcher looked in the face of each as he passed, but looked in vain. Among the latest came a youngster hirpling slowly, for he had taken a bullet in the calf, and grieving aloud over a crippled sword-hand, and to him the old man addressed himself.

"Man, are ye no shamed to be greeting like a bairn? Whaur's yer ensign? Whaur's Mr. John Chisholm?"

"Iss it Ian oie to Hector?—ta Master of Overskaig, that ye wull be speiring for? Oh, ta young chief wass clean gyte the day, whateffer! Indeed and indeed, and I did my endeavour, for that I am a Chisholm of Shinside too, but there wass no keeping with him. Ou! and all the pains of hell in ta wame o' ta man wha blaudit ma wrist!" He limped on, regarded sourly by his old clansman, and was presently under the skilled hands of good Mr. Cairncross.

And now the trickle had run dry, and still he held his post, although once and again canister from Fort San Philip drove the water of the inundation seething before it. Spain had regained her lines and was covering failure with a renewed cannonade.

In the silence that followed a volley the watcher could distinguish the clink of boot-heels upon the causeway and still waited.

Then, brokenly and ill-rendered, came a whistled quick-step, the Chisholm "rant." The watcher beat time for a bar, upon the head of his staff: not the massed bands of the garrison could have moved him so. "Hech! 'tis a wheen years syne these auld lugs heard yon. . . . I jaloose 'twill be a lad o' ma ain fowk."

"Ta laddie comes late . . . he comes last . . . he comes by his lane." He went to meet him. "John, iss it yersel?"

It was John, though scarcely recognisable for the speckle of powder-rash that darkened his face (a pistol fired point-blank) and a cut across the cheek, through which the bone glimmered whitely. The lad stepped out doggedly, despite that awful fatigue which follows hand-to-hand fighting; and for all the secret glory of a first wound which had spared eye

and limb, was in a silent rage with himself and the world at large, exasperated with the final incompleteness of a battle which but a minute before had seemed ideal in its perfection.

"What's this? Ye're no' sair hurt?"

"Naething, sir, naething; but ta dommed vratch hass brok' hiss parole. I brocht him safe till ta heid o' ta causeway. . . . I hae hiss swoord, whateffer."

Alas, poor John! His prisoner, a person of distinction, to judge by the bullion tassel of his sword-knot, having surrendered in haste had repented at leisure, and, tempted by the obscurity of the weather, and disgusted with the ridiculous youth of his captor, had behaved ill. John might grumble; but what cared old Ian Chisholm? Linking his arm within that of his newly recovered kinsman, he haled him along to the Land Port, praising his God in the Gaelic that at this last, and in his old age, He had in mercy sent him a man of his blood to look him in the face.

"Never fash yersel' for yer hurt, John; I've a dizzen waur in me, and here I stand the day a soond man for ma years."

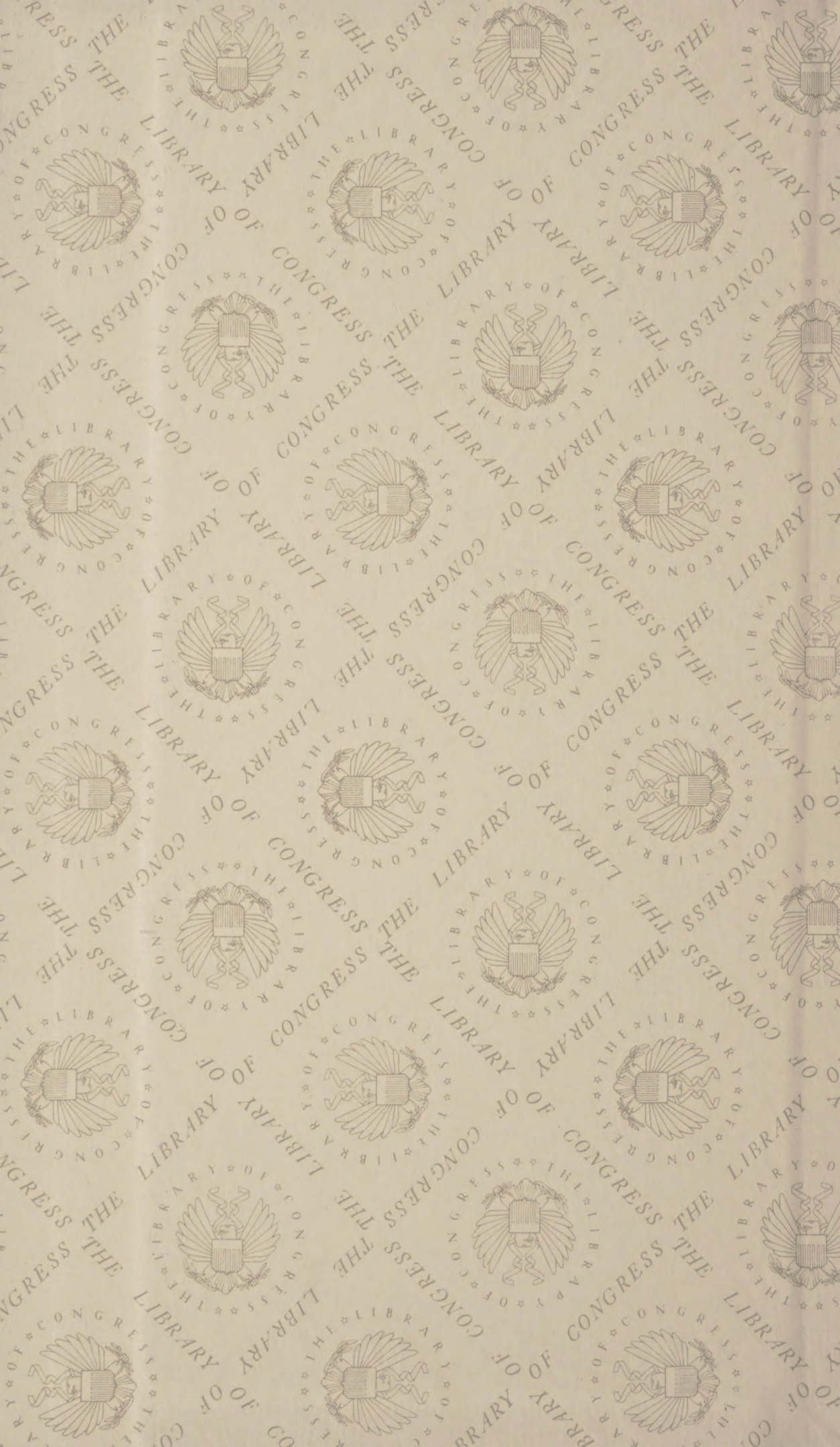
"'Tis not that, sir, but I've naething to show."

"Hoots! I've sin a pretty man gang through three campaigns wi' less than ye hae gotten across yer face and aneath yer oxter. But, had ye naething ava, ye're the man for auld Ian Chisholm. . . . Laddie, I mak ye ma son and heir fra this hour! (Spier o' yer colonel what that means.) Ou, ay, an' I'll see this bit siege through ('twill mind me of Arcot), and Hector and Shinside maun bide their turn."

They had crossed the drawbridge, were under the arch and within the gate now; a dozen hands of welcome were extended; no jealousies had survived that furnace-heat of battle; but the lad broke from the circle of admiring comrades, his eye caught something in the background, "Wha's thot?—*Ta leddy!*"

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